


NOVEMBER 1924

N.S.E. N.S.U.
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THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

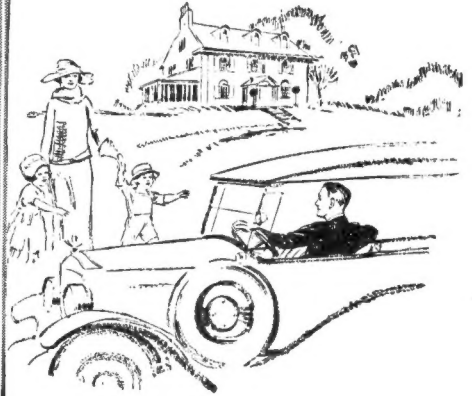
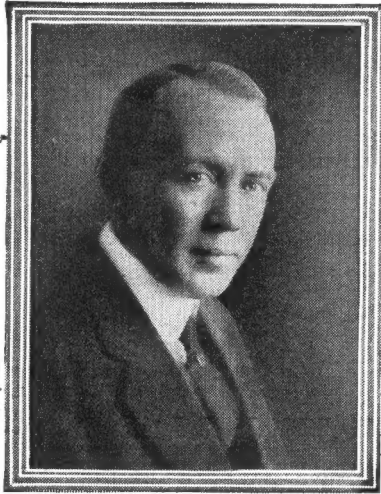
N.S.E. N.S.U.
NOVEMBER 1924 THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE VOL. 40 No. 1



A great novel of
the West *"White Indian"*
By Edwin L. Sabin
also Easy Street Experts
Free Lances, and
Pennington White

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THE BLUE BOOK

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MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER
1924

DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor

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Here we have a notably attractive animal story with a specially interesting background—the history of a South American puma.

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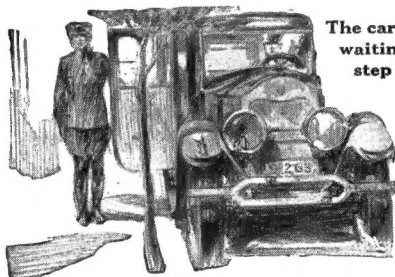
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White Indian

A splendid romance of the Rocky Mountain West and its heroic pioneers, written by a favorite Blue Book author who knows his theme thoroughly.

By EDWIN L. SABIN

CHAPTER I

THE WHITE INDIAN

WITHIN this buffalo-hide tent, a lodge set somewhat apart from its fellows, the young Indian woman seemed to be preparing for prized company.

A small well-tended fire of clean aspen sticks crackled amid its bed of coals upon the bare space in the lodge center. The thin fumes rose around the kettle suspended over by the *trois-pieds* or three crossed poles, and from the bubbling stew the pleasant steam of meat joined them to seek the vent at the lodge apex ten feet above.

Along the circle of the interior (in diameter some twelve feet) pack-bales and loose robes were laid, to keep out the

draft; the dirt floor was carpeted with dry reeds and with robes; there were two low pallets of robes and furs upon opposite sides of the fire; utensils of iron and horn and wood hung from the lodge-poles; and so did a few articles of clothing, primitive but of the country, and serviceable.

It was an interior astonishingly warm, astonishingly comfortable, impervious to weather. All about, the winter of the high Far Western wilderness had gripped hill and vale and level, deadening them with snowfall after snowfall, and fettering with the hard clutch of a cold meagerly assuaged by the dazzling sun from the intervals of blue.

Today the sky had been overcast, the temperature at zero. Now with early dusk the peaks of a score of lodges here grouped beside the cottonwood course of a stream

in the shallow valley floated their smoke-pennons upon the still air. Robed or blanketed figures upon various errands emerged from or entered the door-flaps. And in a nucleus a trifle segregated, there briefly appeared denizens more pronounced of guise—shaggy in hair and beard, in buffalo-fur overshoes, swathings about calves and neck and ears, their loose buckskin shirts belted to confine knife and pistol.

For the party of fur-hunters were wintering in with the Crows—an amicable arrangement that gave mutual advantage of defense, offense and relaxations.

From the copse of cottonwoods the horse-herd, tails tucked in and frames gaunt, groaned and grunted while they snatched at the twigs and rasped upon the bark as though gnawing corn. Hatchets rang upon the ice of the stream and upon the rigid boughs of the fuel-supply. In the camp, dogs whined shiveringly, children piped, squaws screeched and chattered. There were laughter, and guttural orders, and oaths in English. Distant, a rifle shot punctured the lowering winter eve. Inside this lodge apart, the young Indian woman continued her preparations.

She had placed a pair of moccasins, soles to the fire; she turned a pair of buckskin leggings, hung near, to dry them more warmly; she tested with her finger a small vessel of water set beside the coals, and with wooden spoon stirred the stew.

A comely girl she was: of rounded form; of swart countenance flat, but smooth and not unattractive; eyes lustrous black, and Mongol in their lack of white; coarse dead-black hair plaited in two thick braids dangling below her waist; full lips over even white teeth; and high cheek-bones surmounting a soft round chin.

She was clad in a short-caped doeskin smock tight over the swelling bust, belted with beaded hide, and falling in folds below the knees—whence her embroidered leggings, close to the calf, widened over quilled moccasins upon feet small enough for a child. The hems of cape and skirt were fringed with little bells that tinkled; her coppery cheeks were centered with vermilion; the ends of her two braids were tied with coquettish red flannel. Her person was neat; all the lodge was neat; she was somebody's favorite; and while she moved in a measure jadedly—a tolerance recorded in lines visible upon her face—she hummed a little monotone in her own tongue.

She brightened and turned about, suffused with anticipation. Footsteps crunched the snow; the door-flap was lifted; a man came stooping through, bringing the cold and emanating it after the flap had dropped into place behind him.

He filled the lodge with his virile presence: a very Viking of a man, but a Saxon, of blond hair and beard unshorn, of ruddy complexion and blue eyes and generous high-bridged nose, and of length and breadth imposing.

His kingly beard was clotted with ice and frost, and the yellow locks upon his shoulders were whitened by snow. His buffalo-fur overshoes were white and armored with ice; his leggings were frozen stiff above the knees. But as though in defiance of the cold, he wore upon his body only his fringed buckskin shirt, and it was open at the throat.

Without a word the squaw took from him his "two-shoot" rifle and stowed it in a niche against the lodge wall; she took from him his slung powder-flask and bullet-pouch and buffalo-hide mittens and fur cap; and he sat down, to extend his legs and ungirt further.

SHE removed his overshoes and helped him pull off his soaked leggings; she brought him the warm water and bathed his feet, she brought him the warmed leggings and the warmed moccasins; she stuffed his stubby blackened pipe and applied a coal to light it. Whereupon, while she now heaped a wooden platter with the stew from the kettle, he gravely puffed, watching her with a trace of kindness in his steady eyes.

"No fresh meat," he presently said in Shoshone dialect—a ready medium of speech, being easy to acquire. "Maybe a snowstorm coming."

"No beaver?" she asked. She beamed. The god, her man, had addressed her with his lips.

"One trap lost under the ice. I trap no more."

"Maybe catch tomorrow," she said. "But soon ice be very thick."

"Yes," said he. "I have brought the traps in."

"We wait," she encouraged. "Plenty wood, plenty fire; meat next time. This good place."

He laid aside his pipe and ladled into his platter, eating hungrily. Alert to serve his needs, she vibrated hither and thither.

The water dripped from his beard and hair and shirt, and from the overshoes and the suspended leggings.

The flap was lifted again; Indian way, without ceremony, another man entered. He straightened with difficulty, hand to back.

"How!"

"How! Sit and eat."

"Minute, now." The reply was querulous and whimsical. "Drat that arrer-head! 'Pears like the only thing to loosen it up'll be liver o' the Injun that shot it—same as ha'r o' the dog that bit ye. It's wus'n rheumatiz, sartin!"

THIS also was a white man, albeit darkly weathered, wrinkled and pucker-eyed from sun and wind and lodge-smoke: a spare but powerful man, inclined forward, his shrewdly frank visage leathery, his deep-sunk eyes gray and keen, a quiz-zical twist to his lips betokening humor, and a wiry frame endowed with lengthy limbs and strong shoulders. Beneath his fur cap his brown hair, greasy from neglect, mopped the cape of his hunting shirt.

He stored his rifle beside him as he sank, with a grunt, upon a couch.

"Wall, if fill bread-basket's the word, I'll jine in," he drawled. "'Taint never good jedgment to refuse meat."

At a nod from the blond giant, the Indian girl supplied another heaped platter. A personage evidently of restraint, himself, he nevertheless was always glad to see Jim Bridger, captain of trappers—in characteristics his opposite but in canniness to be admired.

"A good gal," remarked Bridger, supping noisily.

"Aye," his host agreed. As if comprehending, the squaw glowed happily.

"Them Nepercies can't be beat for lodge-keepers," Bridger pursued amid mouthfuls shoveled with his butcher knife. "Fed paunch an hour ago, but danged if I warn't wolfish ag'in." He scraped the platter and produced his pipe. The Nez Percé girl handed him a blazing splinter. He resumed:

"Yep. A Ute for smoke-tannin' skins, a Crow for dressin' 'em fancy, a Snake for raisin' a fam'ly, a 'Rapaho for breedin' trouble, a Sioux or Cheyenne for gin'ral deviltry and a lodge-polin'. I've tried 'em all. Had a 'Rapaho last before this. Datter o' old Runnin' Elk, she war. No morals at all. Tuk a lodge-pole to her and told

her to pack herself off. Have a Crow now. Dod rat her! All she thinks of is beads and bells—alluz whinin' about for fixin's, and I aim to get rid of her. For meat in pot and dry moccasins to yore feet, a quiet lodge and a quick hand, give me a Nepercy or a Flathead."

"Aye," mused the blond giant.

They puffed at their pipes, making medicine to the god of plenty. If Bridger had something on his mind, he was not yet ready to divulge it, and the etiquette of Indian and mountain-man alike forbade expressed curiosity.

The host uttered, in negligent tone:

"Beaver are done."

"Yep."

"Lost a trap today. Chain snapped with the frost. Holes are closing—runs covered—houses steel hard."

"Yep," said Bridger. "The men air fetchin' in their traps. Wall, we mought be right comfy'able here. Wood, fodder, meat. Howsomever—" And he sighed.

"Aye?" queried the giant.

"'Twarn't natur to reckon we could hole in peaceable and suck our paws," Bridger complained. "You aint heard?"

"No."

"Injuns."

"Hereabouts?"

"Too clost for company."

"Aye? Blackfeet?"

"Blackfeet or Sioux. You know as well as me that them air the winter Injuns."

"Many?"

"Like to be enough. One o' Iron Bear's young men crossed a fresh trail o' the rascals. Him and Kit air out now to see what's what."

"War-party?"

"Sartin. Only ha'r and hosses fetch Sioux or Blackfeet into Crow country."

"How far?"

"Six or eight miles."

"They may go on."

"Nope. Thar'll be a hull passel cached somewheres in strikin' distance. I tell ye, I smell Injuns, and 'taint Crow smell. We got to fight, or thar goes hoss and beaver."

"That's hard luck."

"Aint it, now! If them air Blackfeet, they wont leave without a scrimmage."

THE two sat and smoked in silence. The Nez Percé girl had been giving ear, from the fire and the dishes. She may have caught but little of the English; she

read, however, the tones and the play of sober countenances, and her soft eyes, fixed frequently upon the two faces, reflected concern.

"Yore woman's better? Acts more perked up," Bridger commented.

"Grieves some. Otherwise well, I think."

"One less to pack on the trail. Boy, warn't it?"

"Yes." And the host added simply: "She's a good lass."

The snow outside crunched again—

"That's Kit. I know his step," announced Bridger.

The flap was lifted, and another man entered from the gloom and cold. A small but compact and full-chested man, he was—a man and yet a youth, not so mature as Bridger, long of body, short of legs, his fair, high-cheeked, flat face red with the sting of frost, his wide gray eyes set in frosted brows beneath the broad-brimmed beaver hat canted low upon the sandy hair covering ears and neck. All his buckskin clothing was blotched with snow, and the fringes were matted stiffly.

"How!"

The blond giant merely nodded and motioned.

"Pot's on the fire," he said.

Kit Carson deposited his rime-etched rifle, removed mittens and weighty hat, sat down to thaw his feet at the fire. The Nez Percé offered him a steaming platter.

"My own lodge air cold," he said.

"'Twouldn't be if you trapped a squaw," advised Bridger.

"Kelly aims to get one. Right kind air scarce," Carson explained. "Red Moon bid me to eat with him, but I reckoned I'd come hyar."

He plied diligent knife. They let him alone until he sighed satisfaction and fished out his pipe. He smoked. Then Bridger asked:

"How's sign?"

"Bad."

"What'd you make 'em to be?"

"Blackfeet."

"I knowed it. Wall?"

"The Moon and I struck the trail ag'in. Follered on and sighted rendezvous. Thar's thirty or more Blackfeet and Gros Ventres, and a few women, camped ten mile yonder up the valley, across a ridge."

"'Foot or hossback?"

"Some afoot, some ahoss."

"Huh!" approved Bridger. "If I didn't smell true, then I never lifted ha'r! And

I heard a medicine-wolf howl last night. That's a sign as don't fail. If thar's anything cussed'er'n a Blackfoot packin' moc-casins, I never dreamt on it. When he goes out afoot, he's lookin' to come back ahoss. Now, do you think you seen 'em all?"

"We seen whar they was. It's a new camp. The Moon and I turned back, and Iron Bear's to hold a council. Aint decided whether to stay or to pull out."

"Pull out, no!" rapped Bridger. "We're yere, and if this aint a good winterin' place, I don't know pore bull from fat cow. Whar'll we pull, with them on our trail? Nope! We got to fight, and we mought as well get in the fust licks."

"Does Iron Bear expect us at the pow-wow?" asked the blond giant.

"Yes. Said for Casapy to come now. Wants to talk with him."

"I'll go," Bridger grumbled—by this responding to his Crow title "Blanket Chief." "When's the council?"

"In one hour."

"You can be tellin' the rest of the men, Kit." Bridger rose. "Tell 'em we're due for a topknot party, or else we'll be smoked out proper."

SEIZING their rifles, Bridger and Carson ducked into the night. The flaxen master of the lodge continued to sit with his pipe and contemplate the fire. The squaw stole anxious glances at him.

After a time he knocked the ashes from the pipe and stowed it into the beaded little sack hanging about his neck. He put his cap upon his head and rose. Anticipating, she passed to him his rifle, his powder-flask and bullet-pouch, without which no mountain-man stepped abroad. He went forth, leaving her to stroke the spot where he had been sitting, then to crouch by the coals, gently rocking and crooning as if to a baby in her arms, while awaiting his return.

Figures dimly seen in the bleak darkness were wending their way to the chief's lodge—figures of other trappers, and the enshrouded figures of warriors spectral in their Crow white robes worn fur side in, for better winter comfort. And when he had entered from the snow and cold, he silently found place among his mates, in the trapper segment of the circle squatted about the central fire that now and again flared up from a strip of fat tossed on by an old squaw.

The warm atmosphere of the fifteen-robe lodge (a size befitting a chief with three wives) was thick with grease-fumes and the Indian reek of kinnikinnick and lodge-smoke and damp skin—an odor, once smelled, never to be forgotten. The lurid flares lighted the roundly converging walls smoke-browned from their original whiteness, the weapons and utensils exposed here and there, the blanketed or robe-framed visages of the Indians and the lean, stubbled or bearded faces of the motionless trappers.

At a word from Iron Bear, the long-stemmed greenstone pipe was loaded with sweet kinnikinnick and a coal, and handed to him, by the squaw. After a single puff ejected upward from deep inhalation he passed the pipe, bowl first, to his left; and from petty chief to warrior, and thence to the trappers, the pipe traversed the circle.

That ceremony consummated, Iron Bear slipped his robe to his hips, and stood. He was a typical Crow—tall and sinewy, of face broad, brow receding, nose prominent, lips thin and straight, abundant hair loosely bunched and flowing; a feather of the war-eagle was thrust through the crown, and upon the chest of his whitely tanned shirt there lay a grizzly-bear-claw necklace—trophy of medicine and prowess in one, an emblem of his furry brother and wrested in single combat from a Sioux chief.

HE spoke mildly, amplifying his words with signs for the benefit of the trappers. His young men had seen a Blackfoot camp one short march distant, in this valley. The Blackfeet were many with but few women. They had come seeking horses and scalps. If they were not after horses and scalps, they would have stayed at home. The Crows were weak; they had their women and children. It would be possible to leave by a quick march and get away before being discovered. Then they could return with more warriors and whip the Blackfeet. Now let others speak.

Whereupon Iron Bear sat down.

They gave opinion, these good-looking Crows—a rich, long-haired, stately people as proud as the Sioux, their relatives, friendly to the whites only in alliance against the roving Blackfeet and Dakotah—gave opinion while in the lodges outside, the women waited upon decision for peace or for war.

Words were cool; words were hot; the

elders counseled safety first; the younger warriors voiced defiance.

“Casapy!”

JIM BRIDGER rose, flinging off cap and blanket for better emphasis. Scarce past thirty, but of twelve years durance in the beaver country—worn hard, wrinkled, graying, and already awarded the title “old” wherever his name was spoken, as a trapper chief he had the respect if not the cordial regard of all Indians.

He launched into harangue by word and sign. Comrades and Crows listened and observed, while the fat flamed up, casting the shadows of his gestures dancing weirdly upon the lodge walls and throwing his buckskin-clad form and animated visage into high relief.

“You know me. I have sat in the Absaroke lodges. I have an Absaroke name. I have fought the enemies of the Absaroke. Are the Absaroke all women? They have no country. The Blackfeet drive them back and forth. This is a good place to camp. The white men will not leave. Let the Crows go to the next hill and watch. The white men will start early in the morning and drive the Blackfeet away. Then the Crows may come down and be safe. If we leave this place, where do we go? The Blackfeet have eyes. Can you cover prints in the snow? Can you travel far in winter, with women and children? Or do you leave your women and children for the Blackfeet, so you may travel faster? I am done.”

The effect was instant. Up sprang Red Moon, the young soldier—naked to the waist, his hand clenched as he shook it at the north where the Blackfoot camp lay.

“The Blackfeet are the Absaroke dogs!” he shouted. “Where the white men go, I go. I am an Absaroke.” His skin glistened with perspiration. “The Blanket Chief lies when he says the Crows have no country. We sit in our country and count the Blackfoot scalps drying in the lodge-fires. I am Red Moon.” He thumped his heaving chest. “I have seen the Blackfoot sign. I know where they sleep. Tomorrow I count many *coups*.”

He spread contagion. Figure after figure leaped upright, shouting and gesticulating; and Jim Bridger sat back and chuckled under his breath.

Iron Bear rose again, signing for silence. “It is well,” he said. “I have heard words spoken from the heart. My men

and the Blanket Chief men will start two hours before sun in the morning and kill the Blackfeet. Let us get ready."

THE council broke up. Outside, the trappers trooped off together.

"That was tall talk, Jim," Carson remarked. "My ha'r felt loose."

"Injun talk," laughed Bridger. "I reckoned to rile 'em. But if I don't know Injuns, I don't know beaver. Wall, boys, run yore bullets and fill yore horns; get yore fixin's in order. We're in for a scrimmage. Them Blackfoot'll fight. Two hour afore sunup's the word; that means five o'clock."

"By gar!" declaimed Laforey. "I be dere. Mebbe now I get me two hoss for one dem dam' Pieds Noirs stole."

With quip and ostensible unconcern, they separated for their assorted lodges. The blond giant presently strode alone, and entered where the fire shone wanly through the hide covering of his quarters.

The snug precincts, warm with the red coals, and the crouched form of the Nez Percé, gave him mute but pleasant welcome. This was home.

He handed over his investitures, and seated himself to smoke. The squaw spoke timidly, as if warned by the slight bustle and the low wailing in the little village.

"You fight the Blackfeet?"

"Yes. Two hours before sunrise."

"They are many?"

He shrugged his great shoulders.

"What matter?"

Suddenly she knelt, to clasp his extended legs and lay her glossy head upon his knees.

"I am afraid," she murmured, and her round back heaved.

He placed a hand upon her hair, so that she shuddered with the dear touch.

"You are a good woman," he said. "I will bring you a spotted horse, so that the other women will know I struck the Blackfeet."

She lifted her adoring face.

"My *hama* is a great white man," she said proudly. "The dog Blackfeet will see the Yellow Buffalo and run. Food shall be ready, that he shall be strong to fight."

With that she stood up, and moved about making preparations for the morrow. She looked into his bullet-pouch; she shook his powder-horn, and filled it; she examined the flints of his rifle—did all that which the wife of a warrior should do.

HE sat gazing into the coals. Outside, the winter night rested breezeless as if frozen immobile. The babbling jubilations and complaints of the camp had slacked; from their cottonwoods shelter the horse-herd wheezed and grunted; from the white wastes a wolf's long hunger-howl drifted lugubriously, rousing the sleepy dogs curled against lodge walls: then all sounds ceased, until the cry of a child shocked the desolate chill with a human note.

The Nez Percé girl poised, intent, hand to breasts. This he observed. The cry was hushed, and she relaxed.

He brooded, that flaxen Samson sucking at his pipe and sprawled at ease in his Indian lodge here remote by one thousand miles of uncharted trail. His thoughts traveled; visions passed in review. Perhaps he saw again the majestic oaks and wide level sward of England, the old houses stately in their ancient settings and secure by customs and traditions—saw familiar forms of sturdy gentlemen and fair women, heard the cultured intonation of English speech, where now holiday fireplaces blazed and candles beamed from silver sconces. He saw (perhaps) that one persistent face, girlish, azure-eyed, smiling, pitying, mocking—saw it as clearly as he could see the face of Jim Bridger, or as he could see, in memory, the peaks of the Three Tetons—they also of this America, and in their white and azure as cold and as heartless as she.

Aye! But he was comfortable here. Such a lodge made of the wilderness a home; he asked nothing better.

It had been a good-enough day. To be sure, he had lost a trap, and a beaver-trap was valued at sixteen dollars. Traps were going up; beaver was going down. Aye? Yet what of that? The winter likewise had bid to be a good one. There was cottonwood bark for the horses, fuel and water in plenty, deer and elk in the bottoms, and dried meat already stored; his lodge was tight, proof against weather; robes abounded; he had the best little squaw in camp; the Crows were not to be declined—worth-while company, although thievish devils beyond their lodge-fires; and the trappers, his partners for weal or woe, were no worse than himself.

What a coterie! He the Mad Britisher, old Jim Bridger the unlettered captain, big Cross Eagle the Swede, Mariano the Spanish 'breed from New Mexico, Markhead from Kentucky, Laforey the French Creole

from St. Louis, the well-educated Thompson from Illinois, the quiet Kit Carson from Missouri (youngest of all, but one who had made many an Injun "come"), Kelly the Irishman, Black Harris the reckless wag—all upon equality and all united for fur, fight and frolic.

Signs had augured a cozy winter—before the Blackfeet showed up. Those damned Blackfeet—the "dam' Pieds-Noirs" of Laforey! But there always were the Blackfeet, or the Sioux, or the 'Rapahos, or the Rickarees, or the Gros Ventres, or the Bloods, or the Cheyennes, or the Utes, or the Bannocks, or the Crows themselves when plunder looked tempting.

Well, as Jim Bridger would say, " 'twarn't white natur' to leave fat meat without a fight," and to surrender this agreeable sanctum to trespassing red devils went against the grain. So in the morning—

His squaw was asleep upon her couch; the lodge was chilling and darkening. He tucked away his cold pipe, peeled off his hunting shirt, and drawing a buffalo robe over him, turned in also, his feet to the dying embers.

Thus blandly slept this huge Anglo-Saxon derelict: mountain-man and free trapper, in beaver-trail gossip the "Mad Britisher," by virtue of his puzzling traits; among his hearty fellows he was called "old Glory" by virtue of his oriflamme of hair, and by the Indians, "Yellow Buffalo."

To all these names he was as indifferent as he was to the name unvoiced—neglected, maybe, in his "possibles" sack, or else discarded forever when he had discarded tweed and fustian for leather and fur.

CHAPTER II

PLUNDER

HE slept with little movement, and wakened as by instinct. The Nez Percé girl was up, kneeling beside the fire rekindling under the pot; the robe upon him was crisp with frost, and hoary festoons draping the lodge-poles waved in the ascending draft.

A stir in the village was perceptible, as though other households also had aroused: voice of man, woman and drowsy child wafted in to him; he heard the brief guffaw of Kelly, who with Cross Eagle and Carson occupied the trapper lodge nearest to his. Horses were snorting—the snow-crust

crumbled beneath shambling hoofs, and just outside his flap an animal pawed restlessly.

That, he knew, was his big gray, already brought in by the girl and standing saddled and jaw-thonged for the service of the approaching day.

Thereupon, after stretching mightily, he threw off his steaming cover, put on his moccasins, and bare to the waist, stepped without.

His horse nickered to him. The skies had cleared; the star-studded black heavens arched over cold white slopes and black stream-course. Pungent smoke tinged the sharp air; fires gleamed eerily through thin spots in lodge walls, and now and again sparks gushed from the vents. By the slant of the handle of the Great Dipper, day was at hand; indeed, the lowest east was faintly pale.

He extended his arms and inhaled with all his lungs. He stooped and energetically rubbed his full chest and arms with snow, rubbed eyes and beard—eschewing the icy water of the creek only because it would have frozen upon him.

By this and other strange habits had he earned the title Mad Britisher, but cared little for that. When a man washes, he still has something of good in him.

Aglow, he returned inside, donned heavy hunting-shirt, belted it with sheathed knife and whetstone, and small quilled sack of flint, steel, tinder and tobacco, and accepted a platter of warm stew from the squaw.

He devoured, with the girl watching him. "Eat," he said kindly. But she shook her head.

"By and by. Not hungry."

He did not question. The sounds of preparations in the camp had increased, denoted chiefly by the tread of horses. And having cleaned his platter, he vouchsafed simply, "It is time," then let her wrap his legs from ankles to knees in strips of blanketing, took from her his further accouterments, and his rifle, settled cap upon head and made his exit. At once he gathered the trailing neck-rope of his horse, seized bridle-thong and mane, and vaulting into the saddle pad, thrust moccasin toes into stirrup-loops. He was mounted.

Other forms had emerged into the dimness and were waiting, centaurlike. From the lodge entrance, the Nez Percé girl peered after him as he rode forward.

"Yere's old Glory!" came Bridger's sub-

dued hail. "Wall, boys, hooray for Green River! Thar'll be wolf-meat today, or I'm a liar."

IRON BEAR had marshaled his warriors.

Upon grunting animals they all cantered into the stinging cold of daybreak, leaving the comfortable lodges to the women and children and old men.

Carson, sitting jauntily in buckskins and beaver hat, and Red Moon in robe to his ears, led the outward march. Behind rode the others: the fifteen enveloped warriors following Iron Bear and the white men—Jim Bridger, old Glory the Mad Britisher, Laforey the St. Louis Frenchman, Kelly the Irishman, Cross Eagle the Swede, Markhead of Kentucky, Black Harris the jester, Mariano the Mexican 'breed, Thompson the gentleman.

The brittle snow crinkled to the swish of hoofs; the breaths of beasts and men floated instantly congealed; dusk, thinned as yet by only the blazing planets in the high firmament, held the valley inert, but the hills of the far east starkly notched a ribbon of pink.

Somewhere ahead couched the Blackfoot camp for a rude awakening.

They rode on in two silent lines; the warriors thinking of the enemy and nursing their heritage of hate; the whites nonchalant, rifles across knees, the tails of their horses gnawed ragged by the pack-mules of many a hungry bivouac, and the zest of Bridger's pipe drifting familiarly into the Britisher's nostrils. So they went forth to battle.

That it was: fang and claw, powder and ball, and knives reddened to the G. R. at the grip—the standard *George Rex* trademark translated by mountain-man fancy into "Green River."

Carson and Red Moon guided steadily. The painted east broadened; the bitter dawn breeze searched the jogging files. After a time, more or less, the two guides halted at the base of an oblique rise, the hand of Red Moon lifted in caution sign.

Iron Bear and Bridger cantered forward and dismounted; and while the Moon stayed with the horses, they climbed afoot with Kit—presently creeping upon hands and knees, and when near the top, crawling flat. They peeped over, and they saw.

They came down; they mounted again; they all rode back to the column.

Bridger spoke to his clustered fellows, in short-carrying monotone.

"Camp's in the bottom t'other side yonder. Ten lodges and smatter o' lean-tos. The Bear takes on through yon leetle pass; we charge round foot o' ridge, below 'em."

The men nodded gravely. The Crows had cast aside their robes, which lay strewn in black and white upon the snow; bows were being strung, quivers jerked to left shoulders, gun-locks rapped to settle the priming. So each man here examined his flint and pan, loosened knife in sheath; and letting the warriors go on, followed Jim Bridger to the left.

They rounded the sloping end of the ridge. All the east was angry crimson streaked lividly, like the trooped banners of a mustering storm. The recesses of the draw threaded with the willows of a stream lay steely lucent, locked in cold, but the encompassing ridges flashed roseate. The Blackfoot camp opened in a curve of the stream, and smoke welled from the lodge-peaks.

And there came the Crows—a dark file rapidly descending from the little pass.

AT sign from Bridger the men deployed and tightened rein. The ears of the horses pricked forward; pace quickened to time with the charge of the Crows. The eyes of the riders searched for the horse-herd that should be in the willows.

The hoofs crushed the snow. A dog barked—and another. From a lodge doorway a figure stepped out. On a sudden the attack-whoop of the Crows pealed, high and exultant and savage. Down they raced, long hair tossing, bodies bent, weapons brandished—a wild cavalcade sharp against the morning light.

"Now, boys! Yere's doin's!" Bridger's staccato rose to a lusty "Whoo-oop!" Riding madly, they thudded up the draw blood-red with the sunrise.

From lodges and brush leantos forms boiled, some scuttling for the willows, some leveling gun and arrow; and the barking of the dogs mingled with the war-cries and the shrieks. There were women here, and children.

The charge of the Crows, their minds centered upon the horses, swerved to circuit both camp and willows. The mountain-men swept right onward, the Mad Britisher surging to the fore beside Bridger and Carson. Rifles cracked; ball and arrow responded; a running figure sprawled face down. Riddling hides and boughs,

the charge pelted on, each man reloading as he rode, guiding his horse with his knees.

They whirled about. The Crows, at the other side of the stream, were yelling and cavorting back and forth, plying the willows with lead and shaft. The mountain-men confronted an empty camp, so quick had been the exodus.

"Ow-owgh! Thar's hair!" Markhead tore in, leaped from his horse and worked with knife and fingers and teeth over the prostrate form. The snow flew about him in spurts, and the rifles of his covering mates joined the issue. He returned, wringing the scalp, uttering triumphant backward yell, but with an arrow through his leg. Then checking his horse, he tucked scalp in belt, slashed the arrow in two, plucked out the headless shaft and flung it contemptuously away.

The battle dinmed. The trappers held the camp; the Crows, at safer distance, held the open; but the Blackfeet held the thicket.

"By gar, I teenk not so many dem Blackfeet after all," quoth Laforey. "We leave our hosses, go in afoot; den we give dem Green River proper. Hey?"

"No afoot for this chil'!" Black Harris retorted. "Hell's full o' trappers afoot."

"What I can't see, is whar their hoss-herd is cached," Carson remarked to the Britisher. "'Taint natur' for hosses to stay put, this kind o' scrimmage."

THE CROWS had no stomach for such give and take. They wasted their energies in shout and motion—scouring around and round, bombarding with long-range insult and missile. Leaving their horses tied in the shelter of the lodges, the mountain-men sought with anxious muzzles for the elusive marks. The death-songs of the Blackfeet pierced the shattered air with haunting chants.

The flaxen giant sprang upright.

"Who'll follow me?" he roared, and ran to his horse. In a moment more he was a-saddle and launched himself upon his gray for the thicket. With glad whoops Bridger, Carson, Cross Eagle, Laforey, Markhead, Kelly, Mariano, Black Harris, Thompson of Illinois, careened after. Snap-shooting right and left with rifle and pistol, they smashed through the thicket; they reloaded, turned, plunged in again; the copse rocked to the clamor.

The giant, raging as if life were naught, crashing hither and thither, broke into a

brief clear spot; his horse recoiled from a prone figure; his eye was prompt—it was the figure of a Blackfoot squaw dead from a bullet. He was off his mount barely for an instant, grabbed up his find, vaulted upon the pad again, urged his gray forward and won free only to be faced short by an Indian. They glared, death poised upon the moment.

But it was the young warrior Red Moon. His fierce eyes fell upon the swarthy babe in the hollow of the giant's arm. His hatchet rose.

"Wagh! It dies."

"It is mine."

"It is a Blackfoot nit."

"It is mine."

They sat unobserved, in an elbow of the thicket. Without and within, a lull had occurred as from very exhaustion. The voice of a Blackfoot, in the Crow tongue, rent the strange quiet.

"We are only women and old men," it announced. "Kill us. But look to your own lodges. A hundred Blackfoot warriors are there."

With an exclamation Red Moon wheeled his horse and bolted. The giant obeyed a like impulse. As he galloped to his company, he saw and he read. The Crows were frozen statuesque, their faces to the south; the trappers, now converging upon one another, reined sweaty steeds, with querying looks uncertain. All had heard.

"A plaguey lie!" wheezed Bridger—a scalp in his belt and his shoulder bleeding. "At the hell-imps ag'in. We'll stop their yawps."

"Hooray for the Britisher! See his plunder!"

The giant opened his hunting-shirt and stowed the shivering child inside; for naked it was, and speechless, except in its beady eyes, with fright.

Again the Blackfoot taunt sounded:

"Look to your own lodges, dogs. You hear the truth. Stay, and you die also."

"Mebbe yes. No like dees *mucho*," Mariano commented uneasily. "More Injuns somewhere."

"By heavens, there they go!" came Thompson's bald announcement.

IN panic the Crows had fled. They were lashing and hammering down the draw. And as seemed to the straining ears of the mountain-men, from the far south there drifted elfin shout and whoop—the signal of disaster.

"After 'em, boys, for hoss and beaver!"

The whites clapped heels in pursuit; upon a shorter line, they gradually closed in abreast, while the air whistled past their cheeks; and as he bored on for the van, the Mad Britisher harbored the babe more snugly.

They flogged; they flew. The hubbub in the south convinced them of the worst. Of mind like to theirs, the Blackfeet had executed an attack coincident with their own, and found a camp defenseless.

Smoke murked the horizon beyond the next swell. Over the swell they ramped, mountain-men in the lead upon the left flank, the long brown hair of Bridger, the sandy hair of Carson, the flaxen beard of the Britisher and the snaky black locks of Laforey and Mariano streaming upon the air.

In the distance a swarm of running, galloping figures dotted a camp distraught. A speck broke out, scudding to meet the in-rush, with riders hot in chase. One moment the giant peered with eyes watering; he cried loudly; he hammered afresh; he lifted his tired horse; bawling a great shout of wrath and encouragement, he sent his gray to the front.

A BLACKFOOT was just overhauling the Nez Percé girl who, astride a padless pony, her braids floating, her form low, hied for sanctuary and the presence of her lord, when the mountain-man thundered in, answering the whoop of possession with blare of menace.

The greedy fingers of the Blackfoot missed their grapple as the girl swerved. He jerked bow and ready arrow to the fore, and the shaft sped, fanning the giant's cheek. The rasp of the feathers, and the weight of the baby deeply pouched in the hunting-shirt folds, swayed the rifle-barrels—the answering ball droned at large. Another arrow had been whipped upon the string, but the huge Anglo-Saxon paused never an instant; charging in with a Berserk yell while the foe loosed wildly and ducked aside, he jammed the rifle-muzzles into the cringing back and fairly blew the astonished warrior from the saddle.

The Britisher pressed right on, his "two-shoot" gun clubbed, to greet the next pursuer. The Blackfoot brave, with whoop triumphant, leveled his musket, and the cock trembled over the pan as the trigger began to yield. The aim looked deadly.

But Carson, challenging, had dashed athwart the course; in mid-career his rifle spoke first; and reeling, the Blackfoot sank in his saddle.

"Thanks, Carson."

The giant turned about and met his squaw.

"Take this. Yours," he said; and he thrust the child upon her. Denying her startled eyes, he left her to follow while he joined the onward-scouring squad.

THEY were too late. The camp had been pillaged. Lodges already had fallen; fires were blazing; the horse-herd had been stampeded by riders inciting with robes and whoops. Squaws were being driven on with blows of bows and lances; and the rear-guard of fifty chiefs and warriors, covering the exodus, defied interference.

"By the powers, here comes my Jinney!" Kelly cried. "The darlin'! I'll take her or go under."

He bolted in rescue, with an Irish yell of encouragement. A dun mule, panicky with the smell and hullabaloo of the Indians, had swung widely out and was legging back for better company. Two Blackfeet veered, full speed, to cut her off.

"Hooray!"

Kelly raced. Close after him, in support, came Cross Eagle the Swede. A collision seemed inevitable. But Kelly reined short and took chance shot. The leading Blackfoot threw high one arm as his horse bounded at the spat of the ball. His comrade, in brushing by him, dragged him from his seat just in time; and now two warriors upon one animal (the wounded man clinging with difficulty) they sped at a tangent to rejoin the rout.

The bullet of Cross Eagle raced them. But they made haven, and with yelps of derision and rage the dark phalanx continued.

The rangy dun mule brayed gladness as she galloped in to Kelly and his endearing words:

"There, my darlin'! Sure, ye're a bad bargain for anny red devil, an' I'm thinkin' the pay he got'll last him a long time."

She nibbled at his coaxing fingers, then with occasional kick of sportive heels followed him and Cross Eagle like a dog.

"No use, boys," Bridger had called to his berating men. "Let the niggers go. Now, what'll be the leavin's?"

The blond giant turned to seek his

squaw. The girl, off the horse, held the shivering babe almost as it had been given to her. Its black eyes, roundly open, were fixed, rat-like, upon her face aghast. He noted again the birthmark, of strange configuration resembling a hatchet-head, imprinted purplish in the brown skin of its shoulder.

"A Pahkee!" she uttered, voicing horror. "It is Blackfoot. No, no! Let the Crows have it."

"A boy baby," he said gently. "Yours. The Good Spirit gives it, for what you have lost."

She stared upon him. With sudden little cry replying to the awakened hunger whimper of the child, she clutched it with clutch famished; and wrapping it in her braids and arms, applied it to her aching breast.

The giant smiled and left her. Upon the outskirts of the camp, Bridger was commenting:

"They got my Crow vixen. I can't wish 'em any wuss luck'n that. Hope they manage to keep her."

Carson panted:

"That's the band o' big War Eagle, warn't it? I reckon I glimpsed him, but he gave no chance to flash lead through him."

CHAPTER III

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE

THEY took stock. Ruin mocked their eyes. Lodges had been dumped upon the fires; household goods also had fed the flames; beaver packs had been rifled and mutilated; powder casks had been emptied or added to the conflagrations; the squaws of Bridger and of Laforey had been kidnapped.

The wailing and the vengeance-cries of the Crows filled the air. Old men and women had been killed, the likely young women and the loose horses added to the Blackfoot booty.

"If that don't make a man *fâché*, may he never draw bead ag'in!" Harris declared.

The others soberly nodded.

"Now we poor," Laforey complained. "My t'ree pack beaver, two hoss, one woman—all gone. *Sacré nom!* For dat I haf ha'r."

"We're lucky not to be afoot," quoth Carson.

"Wall, we got to pull out now," said Bridger. "Can't stay here."

"The Britisher, he get the only plooder," accused Cross Eagle. "See har—what you do, Glory?"

"Keep it."

"Wagh! Hyar's a chil' wouldn't tech a Blackfoot spawn nohow," Harris condemned. "Fust you know, it'll cost you yore scalp. Leave it for wolf-meat, I say."

But the giant smiled in his beard and puffed his pipe, with contemplative eye upon the Nez Percé girl. Closed to wrath and distress, she crouched in the trampled snow, hugging the babe to her bosom as though fearful that it would be wrested from her.

"Anyhow, Bridger's right," Thompson reminded. "If we want to hang on to our own hair for a spell yet, we've got to make tracks. Those Blackfeet'll be back. If they pen us in, we're gone coons. We'll be eatingoccasins."

"Crows heap scared. Mek ready go now," Mariano warned. "Dey know. You bet! Too many Blackfoots."

For the Crows' camp was in feverish activity; the few women were running and shrieking. The men themselves were helping with the horses and travois, while upon the next lookout sentries sat their saddles, to watch for the enemy. There could be no doubt that the Blackfeet, having taken stock of that other camp, would return in vengeful force, well equipped for a siege.

"Ketch up, boys!" Bridger bade. "We'll do our possible, and we haint time to spare."

"Hooray for holin' in!" they cheered, and set to work with alacrity.

Packs were made up from the salvage, travois hastily thrown together; traps were lifted from concealment, animals and travois loaded.

Bridger returned from a talk with Iron Bear, and his seamed face was quizzical.

"Crows say we got to cache by ourselves if we pack that Blackfoot imp. Got to hand it to them, or they wont stand for it."

"I say dat too," cried Laforey. "It bad medicine. We get rubbed out if dose dam' Pieds Noirs know we haf dat *enfant*. By gar! W'at good?"

"It's a hell-pup," condemned Black Harris. "Ow-owgh! Gives this coon, the creeps."

The adverse mutterings spread, until—

"Wall, I reckon we're ekil to makin' our own trail," drawled Carson. "It's Glory's plunder, and he has a woman to tend it."

"Better leave it here, Glory, where those devils will find it," Thompson proposed.

"Lave it?" scoffed Kelly. "No, he'll not! The Crows'll sink a hatchet in its head. Sure, we're white men. I say to Hades wid them, an' the Blackfeet too."

"He carries death, then," Markhead growled. "That's the way the stick floats. But no matter. Let's get out. I'm half froze for a move."

The Britisher had said nothing. He had stowed squaw and child, his trap-sack and sack of meager "possibles," upon his gray, and had faced onward as if contemptuous of discussion.

"Wait, man!" Thompson called after. "Ride your gray and put your woman and plunder on this pony she fetched out. I'll travois my fixin's."

"Nope, thank you."

"My Jinney'll take the woman, barrin' the child," Kelly proposed. "She'll not stand for a Blackfoot. But faith, ye can tote the black spalpeen yourself."

"Nope, thank you."

LEAVING the Crows to their own course, the mountain-men caught up with the Mad Britisher, where he plodded ahead of his horse, his rifle upon his shoulder.

"Cleaned slick, are you?" Carson queried.

"Aye," replied the giant. "You might say."

"Fust thing air, to get out o' this valley and whar we'll have elbow-room," quoth Bridger. "Dang them pesky red rascals anyhow! Who'd ha' thought they'd come it over us so smart?"

Cross Eagle swore.

"Dey ban tankin' same as us. By Jim'-ny, now we haf one big score to settle with dat War Eagle. You bet!"

"Wall," Bridger grumbled, "whar Injuns ought to be, thar they aint; and whar they aint, thar they be, every time."

They pressed on, regretfully abandoning this recent promise of a fat and peaceful winter camp. Now and again they cast glance rearward in the direction of the Blackfoot post. Spies no doubt were watching the retreat, but this was accepted with unconcern. In the mountains one did the best one could as long as one could; and at the end one died like a white man.

The day proved exceedingly cold. The

blond giant's lodge had suffered the full extent of the pillage, for it had been the more exposed, and the Nez Percé girl's bolt for freedom had aroused the enemy's wrath.

Mantled with only a thin, hasty blanket, she sat the horse, favoring the unclothed babe to shield it; and she trembled with the reaction and the cutting air. The baby piped feebly. Hearing the cry, seeing her pinched face, the giant stopped. Wrenching off his hunting-shirt, he masterfully cast it over her and the child; then, bared to the leggings—a splendid figure, his scarred body crossed by the straps of powder-flask and bullet-pouch—he strode on, while the blood surged in combat with the eager frost.

The others marked, and for a space waited, as curious as children, and respectful of that trail-liberty which assigned to every man his own business. Drat the kid, anyhow! 'Twas none o' theirs. But generosity broke the studied silence.

"Hi! Take a robe for yore squaw and put on yore shirt. You can't winter in jest breeches."

And the giant answered, along his pipe:

"My affair, thank you."

"Got no robe?"

"No."

"Wall, get one. Owgh! Hyar's hide for ye, else why was buff'ler made?" This from Black Harris.

"Very comfortable, thanks."

They fell to grumbling.

"*Très fol*, by gar! He march t'rough snow like one half-skin' beaver!"

"Thar's a coon as needs a holler tree."

Bridger burst forth:

"You'll be gettin' white spots as thick as bees at a beein', man. When you're stretched cold, who'll take care of yore squaw and that hell-pup?"

"My concern, Bridger."

Carson galloped over with peremptory mien and tossed a buffalo robe upon the great frost-whitened shoulders.

"You'll keep it or leave it," he said. "It's on the perairie for you. But I'll see no man of yore color go under for a crazy notion, if I can help it."

"All right, Carson. Much obliged."

The giant drew the robe about him and trudged on—a cave-man in moccasins, piloting his household. His squaw's adoring gaze was fixed upon his back.

"Hooray for Glory!" they cheered. "He comes it handsome when his dander's up."

THEY had obliqued over the next little divide and were dropping into another valley. The glances to rear reported no pursuit. The Blackfeet likely were upon the trail of the Crows—an enemy of less mettle than these mountain-men who now possessed scant booty and would give only blows.

All the winter day, short in hours and long in miles, they headed out, and near dusk shaped their route for the course of a stream marked by the welcome willows and cottonwoods. Bridger, in the advance, riding cautiously, from the top of a last swell lifted his hand and reined back his horse. His leathery, cold-reddened visage, under his shaggy cap, was lighted by a wolfish grin.

"Buff'ler! We'll have hump for supper, else I'm a liar. But easy, now, or they'll get wind of us. Want to take a squint, do ye? Laforey, you and Carson circle down afoot. These hosses can't run."

They dismounted and stole forward, leaving the animals to shiver. The Nez Percé girl sat crooning to the baby.

Seen from the crest of the swell that flanked the basin, black spots were bunched upon the snow near the cover of the trees along the stream. Meat!

They licked hungry lips. "Hump ribs thar, sartin as my gun's got hind-sight," muttered Harris. "Or I ask ag'in, why was buff'ler made?"

Carson and Laforey renewed their priming. They conferred briefly; at nod from Carson they set off upon a circuit, to stalk from down-wind. The others watched them intently as they took advantage of every hollow; and small they appeared amid the white expanse.

"Mought as well be ready to do our possible, too," Bridger admonished. "The critters'll run up-wind, that-away—they'll go out by yon leetle pass. When the guns pop, then down and into 'em regardless." "We will!"

The two stalkers were making on. They vanished, emerged, quickened, cowered and stole again. At last, creeping upon all fours, they steadily neared.

"Injuns have been after that herd—not long ago, either," said Thompson. "They're nervous."

"The infarnal wind's shiftin'."

VAGUE alarm had seeped through the pawing, rumbling beasts. Their eyes, of limited vision, told them little; they

quested with heads raised and nostrils drinking the air, and moved restlessly.

The mountain-men here, their own eyes focused and sharpened by desire, read the symptoms. They poised, prepared to dash for their horses and race blind chance.

Carson and Laforey had halted and settled. It looked to be a long shot, but the rifles were being leveled.

"Now it's shoot center, or thar's cold pot for old Kentuck'," Markhead mumbled.

From the prone figures twin puffs of smoke belched to the front. Ere ever the flat reports of the rifles reached the ears of the gazers above, the buffalo had wheeled with movements unanimous and were rocketing full speed up the draw. But see! Hooray! One burly form was plunging in a blind circle upon the spot so promptly vacated. Carson and Laforey were running for it—no, for the straggler that labored behind the herd!

"Whoopee!" Now every man there ran—ran for his horse, mounted, and with jaw-thongs loose and guns flourished, they all poured over and down, charging to harry the flight.

All, that is, but the Britisher. Simultaneous with the smoke puffs, he had cast off his hampering robe and had lunged forward; with stentorian halloo and mighty strides and accouterment flapping, he was well upon his impetuous way.

Like a wild huntsman insensate, a yellow-haired Hercules lacking the lion-skin, this half-naked prodigy careered like a huge white savage over the snowy slope.

In pursuit his comrades flogged and yelled. The heavily laden mounts stumbled and plowed and snorted; the travois bounced. There was no overtaking him.

The Nez Percé girl, bewildered but hopeful, and hugging the child, followed in the rear of all.

The herd was rolling on, torrential, for the upper end of the valley. The distance between the main mass and the straggler toiling upon three legs widened. Disdainfully leaving the wounded animal to the oncoming horsemen, the blond giant swerved to strike the rout before it gained the pass.

Thompson of Illinois swerved also, to second him. He sent his voice ahead in friendly hail:

"Look out! I'm with you."

"Keep clear! My meat!" That was the answer to him, through the thunders of the stampede.

AND then he saw an appalling phase. The valley had narrowed, with a ridge breaking the contour and constricting the stream. Prompted by instinct, or readily adapting to a familiar course, the mass of headlong animals changed trend and bore directly upon the Britisher.

Thompson saw Glory stop, facing the van, saw the brandished arms and rifle, saw the heavy barrels jut from the naked shoulder, saw the leaders of the herd try to recoil, saw the double spurt of smoke, saw the foremost beast pitch to its knees and flounder—and in an instant more saw Glory enveloped, but towering colossal, flaxen and ruddy and gesticulant, above the darkly racing billows that split upon his bulwark front.

The feat had precedent, but never was achieved by closer shave. The herd rocked on united, leaving the Britisher to his spoil amid the spume of snow. Thompson galloped in.

"My meat! Keep clear!" Again that warning blare.

The animal, a young cow, was wallowing. The man stood only to reload. But the beast got to her feet; for a moment she glared, straddling, with eyes bulged; she bawled; her head dropped; her little tail crooked, and in a flash she charged.

In the act of ramming ball, the Britisher sprang aside; he slipped—and Thompson caught breath, with an oath, for his own gun had snapped. A-ah! She apparently had passed right over, knocking the giant's piece far.

"Flat! Flat, man!" The Illinoisan reprimed at speed.

"Damn you, my meat!"

She had whirled about; she was coming; in nick of time the giant squirmed, partly rose, shouted, "Mine! Mine!" In straight line she charged, and as she hurtled by, grazing him, his fingers were buried in her mane.

She dragged him; then he was upon her back, grappling her, riding her—he, huntsman of day primeval, bent low while he sank his knife to the hilt behind her forehead.

She flinched, and he bellowed of victory. Her frenzied pace flagged. As though yielding to the cruel weight upon her loins, she paused. He cried out again, and sprang from the shuddering hide; she lurched upon knees and nose, groaned, quivered; her rear quarters gave way and her life departed upon a crimson flood.

Thompson urged his snorting horse in. With the red knife plucked out, standing astride the body, the Mad Britisher faced him.

"My meat, Thompson. My woman, my baby, my meat! Understand?"

"You're a blamed fool, Glory, but I'll help you butcher," Thompson answered. "You can't eat it all."

"Have a woman to help me butcher, Thompson. But take what you want."

"By the Eternal, you get your robe again before you freeze," Thompson scolded.

"Here's a robe of my own, Thompson. Picked it special."

"You can't work it over, this weather."

"Can, and will."

The Nez Percé girl arrived, babbling, irradiating pride scarcely utterable.

"My *hama* kill buffalo with his hands," she chanted. "He is a great man." Her exaltation almost burst her.

"Bullets stunned. Knife finished," grunted the Britisher.

"Up to Green River, that thrust."

"Aye!" Vitality glowed in him. He had repudiated the robe brought back by the squaw. The baby was laid upon it. They set to work with knives and hatchets and fingers, the squaw assisting, inured to such intricacy, for that was an Indian woman's province.

They steadied the carcass upon its four legs extended; they slit the hide and peeled it off on either side; they stripped the cushioning fat or "fleece" from the spine; they tore out the hump ribs, cut away the tenderloin; from the exposed abdominal cavity they extracted the upper intestines and the liver; they cut out the tongue; and meanwhile munching upon choice steaming morsels, having battered in the skull, the Nez Percé girl scooped out the brains.

THE job was done with no lost motions.

The gray was packed; Thompson's horse was packed. The giant put back his shirt upon his sweating body. The woman picked up the baby. And gory, keen with hunger, convoying the meat and the green robe, they trudged down the valley through the dusk, abandoning the ensanguined carcass to the wolves.

Loud acclaim received them. Other groups had finished. The toll was three, but enough.

Jim Bridger and Mariano were still inspecting an arrow, cut, head and shaft, from the flank of the straggler bull.

"Sioux."

"*St, st!* You bet, Jeem."

"Taint been in any too long. Planted this mornin', or I can't read sign."

"Buff'lo mebbe *mucho* run, come long way."

"He's past tellin'," Bridger grumbled.

"Long or short, hyar's a coon as don't care," pronounced Black Harris, his bushy whiskers empurpled from warm liver. "He's nigh froze for meat, an' he means to set stakes an' chaw, else why was grinders made?"

"That's talk." The approval was almost unanimous. Bridger looked at Carson.

"What say, Kit?"

"I say the time to eat is when you can," Carson drawled. "This is good camp-place. If the Sioux want their arer, let 'em come and get it. We'll be the better by a full belly, anyhow."

"Ketch up, then, for camp," agreed Bridger.

Loaded and ravenous and gay, they trooped on to the woody banks of the stream, and with practiced hands made quick but comfortable camp.

BRUSH and boughs were hacked; twigs were interlaced; canopy robes were spread; fires leaped and crackled; the brutes had been turned out to browse and gnaw; and in a trice the hiss of juicy meat and the spatter of fat announced the crowning preparations.

Now it was every man for himself. Hump-roasts and tenderloin impaled upon sloping spits sizzled; fleshy ribs browned amid the coals; intestines, evicted with the fingers and turned inside out, spiraling long sticks or tossed in bodily, curled like tortured snakes; fry-pans swam with melting fleece and marrow.

Impatience ruled; appetites voracious forbade idle waiting. Black Harris and Cross Eagle were busy cracking marrow bones and sucking down the rolls of trapper's butter, raw and yellow and sustaining. Laforey and Mariano were engulfing each a yard or more of scarcely browned intestines—those delicious "boudins" of the buffalo country. Bridger and Carson were intently culling large slivers from their roasts and swallowing them hot and but half cooked.

Environed by the cold gloom, while the flames leaped and the horses groaned and the wolves bickered over the carcasses in

the snow, it was a camp of plenty. Sufficient were place and occupation, and the morrow troubled not.

While repelition hovered, the Mad Britisher reclined bolstered half up, under the reflecting shelter shared with Thompson, and lazily viewed that trencher-scene of daubed, complacent wild men.

From this ruddy camp and this al fresco banquet, from this enlivened solitude and these gourmand antics, a far cry to England. Aye!

THE Nez Percé girl had stretched the buffalo robe between two fires and was working upon it. She knelt, bent forward, her braids falling over her shoulders; she chopped with her bone flesher, by swift dashes of her fist pecking the fragments of flesh from the inner surface; and occasionally she kneaded earnestly with warmed brains. The Mariano squaw lent hand, opposite.

Aye, a good girl, his Dawn Star. He did not interfere; he knew that she would keep at it, night after night, from camp to camp, until the robe had been cleaned and softened for her man.

"Hooray for Christmas Eve, eh?" Thompson quietly remarked.

"Aye."

So it was. Christmas Eve, if reckonings tallied.

"This morning I was ready to quit," said Thompson. "I'd been hounded and starved times enough. But now what with a shelter at one's back, a fire at one's front, wood, water, meat in pot and tobacco in pipe, why, I fancy a man might be worse off, even where you come from, or I."

"Right."

A full stomach and a pipe counter many ills of flesh or of imagination. It was a satisfactory ending of a day opened with misfortune. There would be persons worse off in Illinois—and in England. Might man justly ask more than these creature gifts praised by Thompson? Warmth, food, tobacco—and independence: had life aught else to offer?

Squatted at his savory boudin "sas-sages," Black Harris was "singing Injun" as though drunken with satiety. Laforey the Creole, joining in, thumped with a marrow-bone upon a skillet from which he had drained the last gill of heated fat and blood. Carson and Bridger were conferring over the Sioux arrow. The others basked variously but all content, and

blinked out of visages unwashed. The two squaws, with scarcely an upward glance, toiled upon the robe.

"Just the same, I hold that a man's a fool to follow this dog's life," Thompson pursued as was his wont. "A bone today, tomorrow what? And after wading, freezing, fighting, feasting, starving, how do we come out? Poor, or dead! By the Eternal, what are two men like you and me doing here?"

"An ass is still an ass, whether in thistles or clover," the Britisher mumbled, along his pipe. "But thistles suit him better."

"Faugh!" Thompson muttered, his eyes upon Black Harris. "We live in sport, but we die in earnest."

"Aye. Like the boys and the frogs in Plutarch," murmured the giant.

"Plutarch! Was he a Crow or a Blackfoot? What's the sign? That's all that matters in these parts," Thompson laughed. He lapsed. "Yes, I often wonder at myself. I suppose I stay," he said bitterly, "to see how long I *can* stay and still take my hair back to Illinois. It's a game. I've a notion that the knife will win."

"A man can lose neither the past nor the future," mused the Mad Britisher.

"Else Aurelius is a liar. We're losing both mighty fast. Here am I, a lawyer, a man of education; you've been—God knows what, but something. Have you ever thought of Oregon, Glory?"

"Aye. It is a name. But beaver is only a dollar a skin, there."

"Beaver! Curse the beaver!" Thompson denounced. "Shall we live and die for beaver? *Cui bono?* There's more in the Oregon country than beaver. There's land better and wider than the lands of Illinois; there'll be settlements; the Injuns are friendly; it's a white man's country; we white men have opened the trail to it; the missionaries from the States have gone in, with cattle and those two scientists—we saw them at rendezvous last summer. That's a starter. Their reports will be getting back soon. People will follow them. They won't live Injun, the way the French missionaries did in the woods of the East. They'll have white women. They won't cultivate fur, like the Hudson's Bay posts. They'll plant the land with church and school and grain and towns, the American way. The Oregon country's going to be white American; England can't hold it from the sea, and her claim to it is doubtful anyway; and instead of staying

to rot here in soil that I don't own a foot of, I've a notion to try yonder, after next rendezvous. How about you? But you're British, eh? Well, what difference? You'll be among your own, there, and in a free country."

"The ass to his thistles, Tommy," replied the other, and rapped his pipe-ashes out upon his thumbnail, Indian fashion.

"Yes; I suppose that's what we'll all say, at a pinch, till we die wolf-meat, and then the people traveling our trails for Oregon will wonder who that little creek was named after," Thompson accused moodily.

THE baby, gorged and fast asleep, had kicked off the blanket corner cast over it. It whimpered like a puppy—instinctively protesting at the chill. The eyes of the Anglo-Saxon giant rested gravely upon it as if he sought the future of a man-child such as this.

"Keep it, do you, Glory?" Thompson asked.

"So I think, if she wants it."

"A Blackfoot!"

"It is hers."

"A Blackfoot to a Nez Percé!" muttered Thompson. "I wonder she touched it."

"I gave it to her. She's a woman; it's a baby; she'd none of her own, and she works hard. I had promised her a pony."

"It's branded." The birthmark upon the shoulder was plain. "The sign's a hatchet. Bad medicine. When Laforey and some of the others see that—they're growling already."

"Anybody who objects is at liberty to clear out! I'm a free trapper, and my trail's as I make it."

He reached and drew the blanket over the child again. His words seemed final.

"Yes," said Thompson. "A trail that will end with an arrow—likely feathered now—in your hump-ribs as payment for the keep of that young imp."

"Aye, when the arrow flies."

The camp was lethargic. Men had turned in for bed. Laforey twitched and snored. Black Harris nodded where he sat, essaying to watch a last chunk of roast spitted over the coals. Kelly's old mule had wandered in and now stood dozing upon her feet as she drooped her long grizzled head in the warmth of the fire circle. Only the two squaws were active.

Carson came, yawning.

"It'll be an 'arly start," he informed. "Bridger aims to move 'fore daylight. He

don't like the signs. Thar's been shootin' and fire, and them buff'lo war wild. And he's heard another medicine-wolf—else same one. We'd best put tracks between hyar and yon, soon's possible."

"So say I," agreed Thompson. "Who's on guard, Kit?"

"Harris aint done eatin'. He'll rouse Kelly, and thar's Kelly's mule. A mule'll smell Injun like a beaver smells bait. Howsomever, 'taint natteral we'd be bothered 'fore mornin'. That aint Injun way."

"Here's your robe, and thanks," said the Britisher.

Carson answered shortly:

"I told you it war on the perairie for you. That's said."

"I'll soon have one of my own, thank you. It will be a good robe when she's finished with it."

"She's welcome to it or to the one I give you," said Carson. "She desarves well—she desarves better then havin' that Blackfoot pup saddled on her, for I never see ary good come yet out o' fosterin' Blackfoot blood."

"What would you have had me do? Leave it to freeze?"

"You could have left it thar on the perairie for its own to find," replied Carson. "To kill it o' course wouldn't ha' been white way. Now if you'll take advice that means you well, you'll swap it to the Crows fust chance you get."

"To be killed?"

"Nope, not in cold blood. They'd hold it ag'in' time when they need to make the Blackfeet 'come,' mighty bad, Bridger says; and he's up to trap with Crows, if anybody is. . . . Well, good night to you. Guns handy, is the word."

CARSON went to bed. Blunt and honest, he left no offense behind him. His heart was open and his tongue straight.

The Britisher and Thompson stretched out under Thompson's robe. The Nez Percé girl stole in, to view the babe. She tucked the blanket more snugly about it, and hovered over it with a little murmur in the Nez Percé tongue.

"You had better sleep. There is a robe," said the Britisher.

"Little more. Pretty soon," she replied, and stole out.

"I'm glad somebody's up," mumbled Thompson. "My hair feels loose."

Indeed, to the giant likewise a sense of peril incongruous to a camp full-fed and

isolated seemed breathed by the night that pressed in from a thousand miles of space. The stars had taken station as if they saw, and knew, and waited. The willows and aspens rustled and creaked, as if distressed in a dumb premonition. In the darkness the wolves still quarreled over bones that must have been picked clean long ere this. And what forms of dread might be lurking yonder, known only to the unknown—well, time would tell whether they were bogies or flesh and blood. But the remark of Thompson somehow jarred unpleasantly and all too remindfully, as if he had spoken one's own secret thoughts so alien to Christmas Eve.

Kelly's old mule stood as before, her ears flopped laxly, her expression benign. Black Harris, a robe over his hunched shoulders, maundered at his fire and spasmodically champed. Would he never have done? The Nez Percé worked again at the robe, but Mariano's squaw had joined her master. The hour appeared to be late.

The giant drowsed off. Sleep weighted him heavily; then dreams bore him far upon magic carpet. He awakened dazed, and permeated with cold dread. But the chill was from inward; it was not of the night. The night, he conceived, had well sped. The camp was still plunged in slumber. The fires had died low, although the coals shone redly. Black Harris was lopped sideways, a piece of meat fast in his jaws. The old mule had advanced in pursuit of the receding warmth, and stood with her solemn head almost over the coals.

He failed to see Kelly. Possibly the Star of Bethlehem had risen, for peace on earth, good will to men; but hereabouts there were only the Great Bear, swinging low, the other stars, very watchful, and the peace, the false peace of a camp of snoring, gurgling men.

Scarcely seen; just beyond the fire glow, dusky forms moved, low to the white ground. Wolves, of course, wolves foraging for the banquet scraps. It was a common sight. The hungry rascals even filched one's moccasins from under one's head.

The old mule raised her head and elevated her ears. He heard a little sound near him; then he saw the Nez Percé girl step out, with the baby, to the nearest live fire; she crouched, nursing the child in the warmth, under the blanket over them both.

Two of the wolves were venturing closer; he eyed them suspiciously, and so did the mule. Cowardly beasts, ghoulish in their

bold stealth. Their fangs clicked savagely as one snarled at the other; their belly fringes dragged the ground while, chary of the fires, they slunk hither and thither.

The mule snorted. The Nez Percé girl protectively hugged the babe, and followed the movements of the brutes. Reaching, she picked a brand from the fire and tossed it. The wolves shrank; their jaws clashed again like steel traps in resentment; and they again maneuvered in the dimness. It really seemed as if they were bent upon getting around behind her. The old mule turned slowly, vicious and flat of ear.

The giant waited. His hand twitched for his rifle—but to arouse a sleeping camp with a shot at only wolves would be unpardonable. He could not understand that sense of perils which thrilled him.

The beasts were sidling on. The Nez Percé girl stiffened—and she sprang backward.

"Dakotah! Dakotah!" she cried. "Sioux! Quick!"

CHAPTER IV

PEACE ON EARTH

WHAT a change! The wolves had metamorphosed—the covering robes had been flung aside; two Indians had issued; the old mule had fled, and a chorus of wild whoops rocked the night. Black Harris uncoiled like a jumping jack—all taut in a moment; the whole camp had upheaved with eruption of robes and diving figures; shaft and ball spatted in from the darkness, sending twigs and fire flying; and the hand of a charging red man was fast upon the braids of the girl as she ran for refuge.

The Mad Britisher roared, and was already leaping.

"Cache! Cache yourselves!"

That had been Bridger's warning. Death invested the shelters and the firelight. But the Britisher was in full tilt, his rifle flourished; so quick he was that he met the writhing pair halfway. The arrow of the second Indian splintered upon his rifle-grip and stung his eyes with the fragments. The girl's assailant sprang free, to duck and turn and face him; swung like a flail, the gun landed plump against the ravisher's neck and he sprawled headlong. At the crack of the rifle of Black Harris the second fellow screeched, leaped high, spun, vainly clutching, and plunged flat, dead upon the frosted ground.

Now all the camp was ringed with whoop and shout and powder-spurts. Half carrying, half dragging his breathless squaw and the baby, the giant himself bounded for the sanctuary of the thicket; Black Harris scuttled rapidly and took cover also.

But to a furious crashing and snorting and fanfare of shrill yelps, the horses had stampeded. The turmoil ceased as suddenly as it had opened. Save for the vacant huts, the scattered coverings, and the forms motionless in the faint fire-glow, the whole affair might have been the horrid fiction of a dyspeptic night.

Leaving their coverts, they resought the fires.

"Who's that?" Bridger demanded.

Kelly lifted the unresponsive robe.

"Laforey, b' jabers! Made a riddle of! Sure, 'tis his last sleep. Domn the Sioux!"

"Sioux, man! Blackfeet! Thar's their sign, and thrown cold. Anybody else hurt?"

Black Harris painfully straightened from his work of tearing off a scalp.

"Some o' you mought help me quit this arrer from my meat-bag," he appealed. "Pesky thing is dang' inconvenient like. Ow-owgh! Easy, now! Thank ye."

The arrow had glanced upon a lower rib and hung skewering the tough outer muscles of the abdomen. One slash of a knife, and it was freed.

HARRIS callously rubbed the wound with snow, and proceeded to bind upon it a wad of buffalo wool from a robe. He expatiated:

"That's what comes from full paunch. Hyar's a coon as knows. Arrer couldn't find leastest hole in that 'ere meat-bag. Mought as well try to get through a bull-hide shield. Wagh! Ary man want the topknot o' that other varmint, with the busted neck?" he asked.

"No," said the giant.

"Wall, a stretched Blackfoot without head peeled don't look natteral." And Harris resumed his labor.

The squaw had crouched, shuddering, with the child. The giant still breathed hard.

"I told you my hair felt loose," Thompson reminded him.

Bridger had viewed the bodies.

"Yep, Blackfeet ag'in. This one's a chief, or war, but 'tain't the Eagle. He war after that woman o' yourn, warn't he, Glory?"

"Yes."

"I teenk after the *niño*. Dat baby!" said Mariano. "Dat baby no *bueno* to us. Bad medicine, dat baby. It get us all killed."

"Who gave the alarm?" Bridger asked. "Whar war the guard? How did those rascals crawl in so close?"

The Mad Britisher answered evenly:

"My woman gave the alarm. I'd happened to wake up. There were wolves—these two, prowling round. I saw nothing wrong in that. She was up nursing the baby, and she somehow knew. We were near to being all dead men," he added.

"Faith, an' you couldn't read Injuns in wolves'-clothin'?" censured Kelly.

"They snapped their teeth at the mule and each other, like any varmint."

"Teeth snapped! Wagh! So they did. I dreamt that myself," confirmed Black Harris. "Teeth-snappin' Injuns don't shine with this chil'."

"Clacked two bones together, I reckon," said Carson. "That war smart. 'Twould fool anybody. Why hadn't you waked Kelly?"

"Wall," Harris drawled, "I was intendin' to after I'd waked up myself."

"We'll have to bury Laforey best we can," spoke up Bridger. "Baby or no baby, the wust is over. Glory's likely right. If hadn't been for his woman up nussin', thar'd be more ha'r missin', and 'twouldn't be Injun ha'r. Reckon that chief war the brat's daddy; if so, he's gone beaver and wont trouble our trail ag'in. As for me, I've stood consider'ble, but I wont stand bein' put afoot. Soon as mornin' shows sign, I'm goin' on the war-trail, and I'll either get my own critters back or I'll get others."

"Sure, I'll follow my Jinney into the camp o' the Grand Mogul of all the Blackfeet himself," Kelly announced.

They covered Laforey with clumps of frozen earth and with brush, in the shallow pit hacked out for him.

"We've done our possible. May the claws of the wolves be blunt," panted Markhead; and that was the funeral service.

"'Tis Laforey's Creek now, by the token," Kelly proclaimed. "An' christened in blood!"

"Another creek named," Thompson muttered somberly. "I wonder where Thompson's Creek waits."

"Laforey's no need for his plunder now,"

quoth Carson. "I vote we give it to Glory, seein' that his woman likely saved the camp."

"If it hadn't ban for the baby, no Injuns come, I tank," Cross Eagle grumbled. "And Laforey be alive now."

"I want nothing, thank you," the giant declined.

"Wall," drawled Carson, "you mought consider yore squaw. Thar's a good robe besides what he was buried in. And a hoss, when we find it."

"A couple o' beaver-traps, gun and fix-in's," Markhead scheduled farther.

"B' gorry, an' his debts," laughed Kelly. "He owed Fitzpatrick for the very bullets in his pouch."

"We'll check up for him at rendezvous," Bridger directed. "He war pore, and he died a mountain-man. Draw lots and each man pay Fitzpatrick, come rendezvous."

"Ten years in the mountains, and dies, wiped out, owing even his powder and lead," remarked Thompson to the giant. "That's a 'free' trapper, like you and me!"

The first lot fell to the Mad Britisher. He picked up the buffalo robe and carried it to the trembling Nez Percé girl.

"Yours," he curtly said. "You need work on the cow no longer."

The others drew for the two beaver-traps, and the few "possibles" such as extra moccasins, razor, knife. The gun was broken against a tree. Thus was quieted the estate, amassed in ten years, of Antoine Laforey, veteran upon the beaver trail.

BY the "sign" as revealed in morning light, the Blackfeet had numbered six, mounted. Assuredly something keener than need of horses had emboldened them to this attack. And if that something included more than the simple element of racial hate, why, the discussion evoked no interest from the blond giant. He, the squaw and child, were an entity.

The company broke camp. Horses they must have, by dint of another fracas or no. That stuff which they could not carry, they stowed in the trees of Laforey's Creek, and led by Bridger, they took the trail.

They were nine men, now: Bridger, Carson, Thompson of Illinois, Mariano of New Mexico, Markhead of Kentucky, Cross Eagle the Swede, Kelly the Irishman, the Britisher, Black Harris, with Mariano's withered squaw and the Nez Percé girl; and they trudged laboriously, laden and

puffing, Mariano's woman bent double with her pack, and the baby riding between the girl's shoulders.

Laforey stayed behind, to receive the wolves.

"The sky, briefly cleared in the night, had clouded again; drab heavens hung low over the white hills void of moving life. The horse-trail stretched onward, plain and careless, toward the east, and Bridger and Carson cautiously surveyed ahead from every vantage-point.

"We'll be running into the Sioux, if we don't watch sharp," said Thompson. "That arrow was fleshed somewhere yonder."

"Aye." The giant nodded. He was carrying the child, to spell his squaw; and in these wilds that was an oddly domestic sight—a free-foot male of buckskins and rifle at stride, with pipe in beard, and baby in arm, and never a curl of hearth-smoke in all the desolate horizons. Was he another Daniel Boone seeking a home unexed by neighbors? Or was he the first Viking in a wintry Vinland, upon wandering tour with retainers and new-found family?

As he marched he hummed:

So now is come our joyful'st feast.
Let every man be jolly;
Each room with ivy leaves is drest,
And every post with holly.

Though some repine,
. garlands twine,
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
And let us all be merry.

The baby blinked at the muffled drone of the words.

"Wagh!" Black Harris muttered. "Best save breath. Hyar's a coon with slit paunch as don't feel extry merry packin' moccasins."

"What noises are those your man makes now?" Mariano's Sioux wife suspiciously asked of the Pierced Nose girl.

"He sings of his medicine," asserted the Nez Percé.

"He carries the baby. That is woman's work. Does he think to sing away the bad medicine in the baby?"

"He is a great white chief. His medicine is very strong. His gun shoots twice. You have seen him in battle, where nothing stands against him," replied the girl.

"The baby is a Blackfoot, and not for you who should have child of your own. He will do well to give it to the Crows," the older woman advised. "Or else leave

it in the snow. No good will come to you from it. The white men complain already."

The girl did not reply.

THE horse-trail led on, out of the valley; and descending into the next flat, that afternoon they were brought up short by a flurry of the signs.

The trail had broken with quick alarm. Horsemen had charged into it, from the aspens yonder; the animals had scattered; the Blackfeet had fled—there was blood upon the snow; and scouting about within a brief compass, the party read the chapter to the end.

Cross Eagle made announcement from the first Blackfoot body, arrow-feathered.

"Sioux, by Jeem'ny. You bet!"

"Sartin," agreed Bridger. "Thar'll be more carcass." And there was, speedily descried, to the full count. The onslaught had been successful. Riddled with bullet and arrow, scalped and stiffened in postures forlorn upon the reddened snow, the four Blackfeet mutely attested to that.

Bridger vented his mind.

"Come nicely, them Sioux did. Blackfeet run right into 'em, lost hosses and scalps too."

"Ow-owgh! This chil' says so," Harris commented. "Hyar's wolf-meat, proper kind."

"Saved us trouble," said Thompson. "They're likely the same Sioux. Now we know where the Blackfeet are. Next thing, to know where the Sioux are."

"They'll have picked up the hosses and lit on, for night camp," said Bridger. "They aint in them aspens, or we'd ha' heard from 'em. Whar's the trail, now?"

And again scouting about, they at last identified the trail of the gathered stock and the captors, pointing onward.

"My Jinney's ahead," Kelly jubilated. "I see her split hoof. Hooray!"

"See notting, after time, if snow fall," warned Mariano.

For the afternoon had darkened, and snow-squalls occasionally volleyed down from the heights, to sting the face with hard pellets. The Nez Percé had drawn the robe, nesting the babe, entirely over its head and hers. She plodded patiently in the wake of her man, as if depending upon his strength. The pace had settled to grim endurance of muscles and purpose. Jim Bridger, wiry and tireless, with long gliding step ever held the lead.

Then, having smelled smoke and having reconnoitered, from the cold dusk they peered upon the camp of the Sioux within easy striking distance.

It was a cheery sight, this camp of convivial fires and roasting meat and snug leantos pitched beside the handy willows. The snow was swirling thickly; the wind gusted; the waste was shelterless to the wanderer outside that haven. Gaunt need looked upon plenty; poverty eyed riches; enemy envied enemy content.

"Eight—twelve," counted Carson. "Them air boys, I'arnin' to be warriors."

Black Harris mumbled with stiff and watering chops:

"Wagh! Boys or not, thar's meat an' fire, an' I'm a wolf half froze for same. What to do?"

"I teenk mebby we get in dem willows an' wipe 'em out pronto," Mariano said.

"Mought, if hosses didn't give notice," mused Markhead. "Kelly's mule has a powerful smeller."

They had arrived sweaty with haste and labor. Now they shivered in the wind. It promised to be a long, cruel night. The babe piped protestant, and Markhead turned savagely.

"Stow that yawp! It'll carry like a dog's bark."

The cringing Nez Percé felt, if she did not understand. With croon and caress and offered breast she tried to quiet the child. At their fires the young Sioux, unsuspecting, lolled and joked, mindless of the storm and of this other marshaled peril. Boys they were—striplings flushed with success and with trophies, and with a tale to tell in the dance before the assembled elders of some Dakotah village.

"By the Eternal, are we to freeze here whilst watching those red imps live fat?" Thompson rasped.

"Lead an' Green River, says this coon," muttered Harris. "He's gettin' *fâché*."

"It's risky shootin'," mused Bridger. "Can't kalkilate on wipin' out complete. If we rush 'em, fust thing we know we'll be inside and they'll be outside, and I don't noways hanker for arrers from the dark. Now, if we mought shiver ourselves warm till 'arly morn— Like to do my fightin' in the daytime."

"Mighty cold here," remarked the giant.

"It's plumb colder beside a fire without yore ha'r on," replied the canny Bridger.

"It's a shame they air boys," Carson averred. "If we could make off with the

hosses—for to fire into a camp o' boys, aint white man's way."

"By dam, dey grow up. Kill dem now. W'at difference?" growled Cross Eagle the Swede. "Bad hearts."

"That's talk," approved Black Harris. "Owgh! If they aint to be wiped out, why was Sioux born?"

"Wall—" Bridger appeared to yield. Perhaps it went against his grain also, for down there the lithe, bronze striplings were merry, exultant and careless; and death was to end their trail of hardships. Bullet, knife and hatchet were to interrupt their gleeful chant. They were not to dance their Blackfoot scalps in the village of their kin, and lodges would wait their return in vain. They had gone forth to be men, and now they had met men, and had lost.

The babe whimpered again. The flaxen giant gathered himself together.

"Stay here. I'm going down."

"What?"

"Peace on earth, good will to man, Bridger. Give the young beggars a chance. Fair warning, else fight. We want fire and horses. Hanged if I'll freeze or commit murder for 'em."

"Hey! What's the float-sign?" Black Harris queried.

"I'll talk to 'em. You come on after."

"*Santo Dios!* Dey young bucks. You lose you ha'r sartin," protested Mariano. "I haf Sioux squaw, but I no go in, you bet!"

The giant had tramped away without further word.

"Paunch-shot an' crazy!" Black Harris criticized, gaping after. "Thar's a gone beaver. This coon don't speak for ary peace whilst Injuns chaw. He'll jest wait an' see."

"Glory's up to trap," said Carson. "Mebby it'll work. You can't tell."

"Foller down, boys. Have yore weapons ready," Bridger added. "For if he goes under, we'll make peace proper, or may I never set trap ag'in."

THEY started, with the Nez Percé girl softly wailing as if she moaned in a death-chant. And as they trudged on, their eyes and ears expectant, they witnessed a Sioux lad, and then another, tense alertly—and from the whitened gloom there had issued a substantial apparition, large and bright, of yellow beard and dingy buckskins snow-laden, rifle negligently in hollow of arm. Without pause it crossed right

forward, and seated itself at the central fire, and asking no leave, it appropriated a slab of meat.

A unanimous "Ugh!" may have passed through the circle. The Sioux apparently moved never a muscle. They sat, amazed, very watchful, their painted faces and their half-covered forms rigid, their bright, fixed eyes betraying their disquietude, while here and there a hand crept for knife or gun.

They were young, these fledgling warriors, and far from home, amid the night. Out of the night and the storm had descended this stranger—white, yellow, gigantic, in garb and form human and of assurance baffling. Was he Wakan-tonka, the Good God—or was he a foolish man, to kill whom would be a feat?

The witnessing trappers gasped.

"He's in sanctum, but his ha'r's loose," quoth Carson.

For now, as they hurried nearer, deploying and stumbling, and cursing the fool, one of the Sioux at last had challenged explosively, with word and sign:

"Who are you?"

Glory replied all calmly, even insolently, as he munched, and absorbed the warmth: "Beaver-hunter. White man. American."

The breeze bore his curt English words to the ears outside.

"That air his death-warrant, three times, if they understand," Bridger muttered.

The Sioux nostrils swelled; the eyes glittered with quick heat. They debated among themselves, in low tones, while they strove to fathom this impudent guest who sat uninvited at their fire and helped himself and boldly defied them.

THE young Sioux spoke again, more rudely.

"The Americans are dogs. What do you want? Are you tired of life?" And his gestures and his sneer conveyed menace. Sudden action couched behind the laughter and the poise of his mates.

Then the Mad Britisher laughed also, out of ignorance, out of contempt, take it as they would. He wiped his beard, and he shouted into the night:

"Come in and talk with these beggars, somebody. They wont hurt you."

The effect was remarkable. The Sioux sprang to their feet, weapons clutched, faces turned with eyes upon the pregnant gloom whence the yellow giant's booming hail had summoned the unknown.

"Fat's in fire!" Bridger rapped. He advanced unhesitatingly, and the Sioux sinews tightened at the sight of him, lean and snowy, with palm advanced.

"How, friends!"

There were guttural "How's," snaky eyes darted, still inquiring of the darkness.

The giant at the fire prompted shortly as he helped himself to more meat:

"All right, Bridger. Tell 'em it's peace or fight. They're damn' young rascals, o' course, but fair play. If they want to fight, they'll get wiped out. We mean to have fire and meat, and our horses."

Bridger spoke:

"The Dakotah have fire and food. My men are cold and hungry. Do the Dakotah tell them to come in?"

Sioux looked at Sioux, and strove to read covert threat in the question. One asked:

"Where are they?"

"Watching." And Bridger slightly grinned. "Thar's a bead drawn on yore black heart, too, this minute, else I'm a liar," he added in gusto of English.

"How many?"

"Must think me a plaguey fool," muttered Bridger. He answered: "As many as I see you are will come in. The rest will go back."

"Where?"

"To the large camp."

"Wagh!" exclaimed the smart young Sioux. "If there is another camp, then what do your men want here?"

"Want yore topknots, if you don't talk more purty," grumbled Bridger. He answered, as wily as the wily reds themselves: "The Blackfeet stole horses. We have followed and have seen that you took the horses from the Blackfoot wolves. To-night we will camp with you, and when you go in the morning you can leave our horses. Now," he concluded, in the vernacular, "drat you, it's chaw bacon or fight!"

"That's right, Bridger," approved the giant, complacently munching beside the fire. "No use wasting powder. Couldn't talk to the fellows myself. Knew you could."

The Sioux sensed a trap. They yielded to policy, for the Indian is nothing if not practical.

"It is true that we struck the Blackfeet and took horses," said the spokesman. "We did not know they were the white man's horses. Let the white men come in to the fire and we will talk."

"The hearts of the young Dakotah are good?" Bridger demanded.

Thereupon the stripling warrior drew himself up haughtily. It was his first leadership upon the war-trail, and he had to play the part.

"The Americans are liars, but I am a Dakotah and I speak straight. We are here to strike the Blackfeet and the Crows. We do not wish to fight the Americans."

"By golly, if that aint a lie, I never heard one," Bridger commented. "Howsomever, I'll swaller it." And he waved the party in.

THEY came—Black Harris, Cross Eagle, Carson, Thompson, Mariano, Mark-head, Kelly, the two women—came stumbling upon numbed feet, out of the darkness, up to the fire; and the young Sioux, aquiver with enmity, stoically viewed, for to express one's secret thoughts was unmanly.

Packs were dumped. With scant and contemptuous "How!" Black Harris seized upon a spit, and as he devoured, he gabbled of joy inordinate.

"Ow-owgh! Here's better nor moccasins, an' I'll stake my ha'r on that, else why was buff'ler made—an' Injuns to shoot 'em! Wagh!"

"You never did have no manners," Bridger reprimanded. "Now, fire's free, I reckon, but we can't act too pore, or thar'll be powder burnt yet."

So they produced their own meat, and they erected their shelters, and the twelve young Sioux, having shaken the proffered hand of the astute Kit Carson, and of Mariano, who once had lived in the Sioux lodges, ever watched.

Then presently with a quick movement one rose and stepping to the Nez Percé, opened farther the robe upon the babe, despite her lifted arm. He stared down at the nursing thing; and he taxed her:

"A Blackfoot!"

The others crowded to inspect. At the canopy of alien faces, the babe squalled; the Nez Percé girl strove to cover it—an instant more, and the flaxen giant had hurled the warriors right and left.

"Get out o' here. Mine!" he said. And he sat down. The girl beamed maliciously. Her man had acted. He proceeded to puff his pipe, and he sang in his beard:

So now is come our joyful'st feast.
Let every man be jolly;
Each room with ivy leaves is drest,
And every post with holly.

Though some churls at our mirth repine,
Round your foreheads garlands twine;
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
And let us all be merry.

The Sioux communed among themselves. "How do you suppose they read the sign on that imp?" Thompson asked, of Mark-head.

"I don't know. But it's got 'em guess-in'."

BRIDGER had been talking with them by gesture and word. The leader queried:

"What does that Pogedoke woman do with a Blackfoot brat?"

"I see no Blackfoot," replied Bridger. "The baby is hers, and that yellow man's. She is his wife."

"Who is that man?"

"His name is Yellow Buffalo."

"A Blackfoot does not spring of a white man and a Pierced Nose woman. Where did it come from?"

"It is his and hers," repeated Jim Bridger. "I have said."

"Then it is witched," asserted the young Sioux. "He had better get rid of it."

They talked again among themselves, with glances at the yellow man and the woman, and the bundled robe. The young Sioux addressed Bridger; and Bridger called across:

"They want to buy your brat, Glory."

The giant answered lazily:

"Tell 'em to go to hell, Bridger."

Bridger translated into language diplomatic.

"A father does not sell his child."

"That is a Siksika man child. Its medicine is bad. Let the Yellow Buffalo give it to us and make his wife give him another."

But the giant was caroling, inattentive. For a long time they scanned him, and speculated, and discussed, and the tenor of their speech was "medicine." This was a little incident; they probably would have killed the baby—but it oppressed Mariano and Cross Eagle darkly, and set even Thompson to brooding.

Round your foreheads garlands twine,
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
And let us all be merry,

boomed the Mad Britisher, while his woman proudly attended.

THE snow beleaguered in the night, and the brush shelters whitened. Laforey's spirit wandered upon the ghost trail. The

wolves had ere this fed upon the Blackfoot corpses. But Christmas Day had ended well.

"Aye," murmured the flaxen giant, out of thought unspoken.

In the morning the storm had ceased; the day promised to be one of brilliant sunshine. The Sioux left, ostensibly satisfied with small presents of powder and ball and a knife or two, in exchange for the return of the horses and Kelly's mule. Thus they saved their faces. From the camp now well stocked, Jim Bridger peered after the cavalcade. He laughed silently.

"Thar they go. They've no notion o' meetin' up with the big trapper's camp I told 'em of. Brave Elk—he war the leader—axed me partic'lar wharabouts it lay, and I said right over yonder. But that aint whar they're headin'. And in case next time I run out o' lies, or Glory's peace on 'arth medicine don't 'come' strong, I reckon we'd better get, lift our caches back at the creek, and find the Crows ag'in."

CHAPTER V

THE YELLOW BUFFALO SAYS NO!

THE winter village of the Crows, re-found, blotted the white expanse of this favorite hill-locked valley. Along the crooked stream the smokes of three hundred lodges flaunted defiance to the changeful skies. Confident in its strength, the village was arranged with little order and cohesion. Nevertheless a spot had been assigned to the trappers by Weasel Mouth, the ranking chief, for ceremony was not to be omitted.

"In this place," he sent word, "you will find wood and water, shelter from the wind and food for your horses. Let the men of Casapy grow fat among their friends the Absaroke."

"Faith," laughed Kelly, "barrin' the baby, we're like to suck our paws in peace till spring. Would ye trade the brat for a good lodge, Glory?"

But the Blackfoot scalps bought hides for two lodges, and squaws to help sew them; and almost before the Crows had danced the scalps, the two lodges were erected: one for Glory, Carson, Thompson and Kelly, the other for Bridger, Cross Eagle, Mariano, Markhead and Black Harris. Thus each lodge had its woman.

There was much visiting and feasting, much dusky courting, and story-telling o'

nights by the elders around the lodge fires. Iron Bear's band was here—Red Moon came and went; he would sit by the hour in the lodge of the Glory household, his black eyes upon the girl and the baby, so that Thompson said:

"The Moon's sweet on your woman, Glory."

At which the giant rumbled in his beard.

One day, when all but the Britisher were absent from the lodge, no less a personage than Weasel Mouth himself came, and sat down. They two silently smoked. And the ashes of the pipes having been rapped out, Weasel Mouth said:

"I hear that the Yellow Buffalo has a Blackfoot baby."

The giant replied:

"I have a baby. It is mine and my woman's."

"Do the buffalo and the she-deer mate to produce a coyote?" Weasel Mouth reproved. "No. Where is the baby?"

"My woman is visiting, and has it with her," explained the giant.

"The Absaroke will buy the baby of you, and you can beget another, of your own blood."

"It is mine and hers. I do not sell."

"You will do better to give it up," said Weasel Mouth. "I advise you as your friend. I will pay you five horses."

"The Absaroke mean harm to the baby?" the other queried.

Weasel Mouth answered earnestly:

"We mean no harm. The baby is a Blackfoot, but it shall live and be brought up by my own women."

"What do the Absaroke want of it, then?"

"The lodges of the Absaroke are many, but the warriors are growing few," said Weasel Mouth. "The baby is a man child, and will take the place of somebody who has fallen."

"Can a Blackfoot become a Crow?"

"Can a Blackfoot become both a white man and a Up-pup-pay?" Weasel Mouth retorted. "Can the woman carry a Blackfoot baby to her own people when you go to your people?"

"My people are here; the woman and I are one," replied the giant. "The baby is ours, so why should I give it away?" He was still wondering why this persistence to acquire the baby from him.

"You are poor. The Absaroke offer you ten horses for the baby that is not yours. With ten horses you will be rich, for you

can load them with furs. Babies are easier to come at than horses."

The flaxen giant shook his head.

"I keep the baby," he said. "It is a good baby, and brightens the lodge."

"Listen," Weasel Mouth insisted. "I see your lodge dark and cold because of that baby which is not your blood. The baby is bad medicine. The Absaroke know what to do with it, but you are not its father, and the Up-pup-pay woman is not its mother, and you will get only shame and ill luck by carrying a Blackfoot around with you. We will give you ten horses and load one horse with all the furs that he can bear. Then you can get a baby of your own."

"I have said," replied the giant. "There is no use talking more."

Weasel Mouth wrapped his splendid robe around him and stalked out. The Yellow Buffalo relighted his pipe, and sat and meditated. Assuredly the Crows put high value upon that baby. Just why, he did not know; the village appeared to be full of babies.

HE and Carson and Thompson and Kelly later discussed the matter.

"The Crows air great on adoptin'," quoth Carson. "Mebbe they reckon if they can ketch him young enough they can turn a Blackfoot into a Crow. But this baby has raised heap excitement in the village. That I know. They've held council on it."

"The birthmark must be a medicine-mark. They aim to kill it; else 'tisn't reasonable they'd go to such length to buy it," said Thompson.

"You can't read Injun mind," said Carson. "No white man can. That baby's somethin' special. They intend to hold it; that's my opinion. It's more use to them than it is to Glory, for he can get another; and if I war Glory, I'd give it up ag'in' time when it mought be moughty unhandy."

"Wont ye give the little divil up whilst you have the good chance, Glory?" Kelly cajoled.

"My affair," the giant answered. "My woman, her baby."

"But would you take it home, or bid her take it home, when time comes? If 'twas hern, that'd be different."

"This is home."

"I was thinkin' of the Old Country, or of the States," said Kelly. "Faith, none of

us expect to spind our lives here if we keep our ha'r."

"I know no Old Country, nor States," the giant pronounced. "I'm a trapper. The life suits, and I do as I please with no by-your-leave of white or red."

"Where lies the creek your name will christen, I wonder," murmured Thompson. "That's the end of the trap-trail."

"Ought to be a mountain," laughed Kelly, "for a man the likes of him."

IT was a day or two afterward when the giant returned from a hunt and found the Nez Percé crying, while she rocked over the babe.

"What troubles you?"

She replied with head covered:

"I am afraid. I have heard bad words."

"What are the words that make Dawn Star afraid?"

"They say the baby is evil. You are a white man. Some day you will leave me, and what then can I do with a Pahkee if I go back to my own people? I have no child of my own. I shall be shamed. The Blackfoot will hunt you and kill you, and I shall be a Blackfoot slave. I should give the baby up." She babbled on. "Are you going to throw me away, Yellow Buffalo?"

"Whose words are those?" he demanded.

"Red Moon's. He would marry me," she sobbed.

He sought for Red Moon, and found him and spoke without ceremony.

"I hear you," the Moon answered calmly.

"Now let us talk. You are a man; I am another. You are white; I am Absaroke. I have looked upon the Up-pup-pay woman. She is good. After a little you will have no use for her. It is time I set up a lodge of my own. Give her to me, and I will pay you ten horses."

"Why do you say I will have no use for her?" the other asked curiously.

"That is the white man's way. The white man goes; the woman stays. He is done with her, like a pair of moccasins. Give me this woman of the Up-pup-pay while she is young. I will take care of her. You can get some old woman to cook for you and tend your lodge," Red Moon added slightly. "Then when you go, it will make no difference to her."

"I do not go," smiled the giant. "I have chosen to live in this country, and it suits me."

"You are speaking with the tongue," Red Moon answered. "Why should you

live red, when your heart is white? No. You are here to make use of this country which is not yours. When you are tired of it, you will go to your people, but you will not take the woman. Give her to me."

"Aye," said the giant. "But the baby. The baby cannot do without a breast." And he waited.

"Oh!" replied Red Moon. "It is a Siksika, and its blood is bad. But she shall keep it, and I will give her children of her own."

"If I sell you the woman, I keep the baby," said the other. "I would find another woman to raise it."

Then Red Moon replied quickly:

"No. She has made the baby hers. You could find no other woman to raise a Blackfoot brat. She shall care for the baby in my lodge until we know what to do with it, and you will be well rid of such a thing. Then your trail will be safe."

Glory laughed.

"We have talked enough," he declared. "I have no thought to give up my woman and the baby. I ask you to stay away from her, for I love her and I do not want her troubled with foolish words."

"You shall have twenty horses and many furs, for her and the Blackfoot pup," said Red Moon. "That is a good offer. You had better take it."

"No."

The Moon changed tone and countenance. He laughed also, arrogant and admonitive, with open sneer.

"The Yellow Buffalo thinks to live with his woman and the baby that is not his nor hers. There is a cloud over him. Red Moon is young, but tells him his trail is short. The Blackfeet shall know that the baby is dead. They will mourn, and they will not forget the Yellow Buffalo."

Crouched by the fire in the lodge, the Nez Percé girl gazed up apprehensively at her lord's return.

"You have seen him?" she quavered.

"Yes. Does Dawn Star wish to take her baby and go to the lodge of Red Moon? He is a warrior and will be a chief."

"No, no!" she wailed. "I am the wife of Yellow Buffalo. Without you I should die. Am I not a good wife?"

"You are a good wife," he said. "Stay with me. Where I am, you shall be."

"I keep the baby?"

"Yes. That is ours. I gave it to you, and nobody shall take it."

"The Dakotah would buy it; now the Absaroke would buy it. The old women say bad things; they say it will bring only evil to the trail, and I will lose you. The Yellow Buffalo sees me afraid."

"What have you to fear while you are with me?" he answered, and stroked her glossy hair—he, towering like a god above her. "You are mine, and am I not strong? Has anything ever stood against me? All that talk is foolish jealous talk; now Red Moon will stay away from you, for I have told him to; and in the spring we will travel, and while I catch the beaver, you shall tend my lodge, and the baby, and we shall be happy."

"You are a white man. Maybe you will grow tired of a lodge with Dawn Star," she faltered.

"No," he repeated. "I want nothing else. Did I not choose you to be my wife? And see—I refuse you to others although they offer many horses."

She proudly lifted her head.

"I fear no longer," she announced. "I am the wife of a great chief. He is strong, and he says he will not leave me. I will not listen to the lies of the Absaroke. Let the Blackfeet come and find us! At the shout of the Yellow Buffalo, they will run away. I am very happy."

When the other men entered, she was preparing supper, and singing a little monotone that she had improvised—

Yellow Buffalo is my man.
He is a great chief.
His gun shoots twice.
Listen, my baby:
That is your father.
He blows away the enemy.
You shall grow strong like him.
In our lodge you shall grow strong.
Of his strength you shall drink.
Yo-ha, yo-ha!
He and I are one.
While I keep his lodge clean,
He will cherish me.
That is said.
You have heard.
Now I am happy.

CHAPTER VI

THE DANGER TRAIL

BEHOLD the beaver-trapper at his work? Spring has come to the mountain West. Pines and spruces are brightly greened at the tips; the cautious cottonwoods have budded; the matted kinnikinnick of the high slopes has bared; valleys

are lush while crests are white, feeding their melted snows to the quickened streams below.

The beaver—busy animal—are repairing winter ravages. The bear have issued from hibernar quarters; the elk are following the snow-line upward; the deer are grazing in the open; the Sioux and the Blackfeet are seeking the horses of the Nez Percés and Flatheads across the unlocked passes; the Crows are guarding their borders against the Blackfeet, Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho; the mountain Indians are invading the buffalo range of the plains Indians; and joining in the general movement, the fur-hunters are ransacking the beaver streams.

It is afternoon. In the shallows of this wild, secluded little waterway long virgin and inviolate, a blond giant is setting another trap. He gently sinks it before the telltale run by which the beaver, forage bent, makes exit; he stoops, ankle deep in the ripples; and wading farther, he plants his pole, of seasoned wood, from which the chain leads to the trap. Now he is wet again above his knees, but the trap is secured, and that little float will signal to him the location of trap and carcass.

He carefully circumvents the trap and chain. His rifle is in the hollow of his arm—precious rifle. He lifts his trap-sack and toils on, upstream, covering his trail with the water. In that trap, he reasons, a beaver will be caught by the forefoot; floundering, it will drown in the current. One skin.

He pauses, and considers, and wading boldly, sinks a deeper trap, ten inches, this time in a beaver channel leading to and from yonder lodge. A slender little twig he strips of bark and budded joints; he inserts its tip into the vial of an antelope-horn tip hanging at his waist, and thrusts the butt down through the trap jaws. The twig end, coated yellowish as if with butter, tops the surface by three or four inches. That is the "medicine," to titillate the beaver's nostrils. A potent fetish, that medicine, which, taken from the beaver's own glands, self-feathers the arrow that kills. The twig is steeped not only in ointment but in lore: to the musk is added the mysterious charms of assafoetida, aniseed, cassia, oil of amber, of cloves, of fennel, thyme and rhodium. Nature is improved upon by secret formula and cabalism, and the beaver's nose is subjected to a witch's brew carried in a wooden-stoppered antelope-horn tip. And thus chal-

lenged, the beaver will drop his hind legs, to rear and smell. One beaver more.

The giant plants another pole, picks up his trap-sack, and carrying sack and rifle, plods on.

IT is a great game for a large man—a man of parts. He is blood-smeared; there had been beaver carcasses to skin and cast aside this morning. He is soaked from the waist down—there had been carcasses to salvage in deep water, and he is ever wading. From the knee down, he has pieced out his buckskin with blanketing; unless thoroughly smoke-tanned, his moccasins and leggings will dry hard and pinch him cruelly. The water is very cold. Only his abundant vitality armors him against rheumatism and tender joints.

His wits are active. He, white man, matches them against the wits of red man and beaver. He must commit no error of judgment. In the one case he will lose his life; in the other case he will lose a beaver for which he risks his life. In that thicket an arrow trembles upon drawn bowstring, and the scalp-yell is just about to burst from parted lips; in that domed earthen lodge, or underneath this very bank, an old-man beaver meditates and laughs, and teaches respectful youngsters to be up-to-trap.

Verily, to trap the beaver is an interesting pursuit, a vocation employing one's mentality so that one forgets other pursuits that one may have known. It relates to nothing that one has left in the States—nor in England. Blacksmithing, lawing, shopkeeping, college-going, sauntering on Piccadilly—even love of woman, do not equip for the beaver-trail, although love of woman may be a prime impetus.

Here is a slide, by which the beavers emerge from and reënter the water. The trap should be set just under water at the foot of the slide, if the beaver is to be caught by the forepaw; a little deeper out, if by the hind paw; and in either event, deep enough so that the pup beavers will pass over it. The pelt of the pup beaver is worthless. No medicine is required, unless one wishes to attract the male beaver rather than the female, for the female pelt is of the less value. But the pole should be planted well distant from the bank, else the beaver will land and will gnaw off his entrapped leg. And the pole should be of dry, dead wood, or he will gnaw that off, at the chain, and drag the trap away until

it drowns him or he frees himself. To seek a trap in swimming water is unpleasant.

The traps have been set. All human trail, every human scent of hand or fingers or moccasin-sole, has been washed out with water. The float-sticks have been soused, and the whitened tops of the poles and their scars newly showing have been aged with mud. No practices of the honorable guild of beaver-trappers have been omitted.

There! The sack is empty; the trapper is still alive. He is muddy, wet, hungry; but no Injuns or signs of Injuns yet. And with rifle and sack, he back-tracks to his horse, or slops afoot, through the perilous dusk, to that camp where his partner (if he still has one) is wending like way from trail similar.

THE blond giant finished with his trap-setting. He straightened, mopped his face, shouldered his rifle, and with trap-sack and a beaver-pelt under arm, he unerringly retraced his course, downstream, to the alder clump that harbored his big gray. Thence he rode through the deepening twilight to camp, and home.

Thompson was already there. Black Harris should turn up presently. The Nez Percé girl and Harris' elderly squaw (a lone widow who had accompanied him from the Crows) were cooking supper. It was a snug place, this, with the dancing flames, the busy women, the steaming kettle, the baby propped against a tree, the opened lodge, the animals grazing upon the out-skirts, the beaver-tails and a quarter of deer hanging from spruce-boughs.

Aye, it all was a goodly sight—a domestic welcome to a tired man.

The Nez Percé took his horse. Warm water, soft-dried moccasins and leggings were waiting for him. He proceeded to change.

"How's sign?" Thompson queried. Aye, this was the inevitable first utterance: "How's sign?"

"Fair. We're like to do well."

"Yes," said Thompson, "if the Injuns let us alone. Ten beaver today; tomorrow—what?"

"Tomorrow," quoth the giant, "is in the lap of the gods."

"The only gods I know are the traders," remarked Thompson. "A pack of beaver for a gallon of whisky: that's the lap of your gods."

"You don't have to take the whisky, you know, Tommy."

"Then what is a man to do—a man like you or me? Whisky's the shortest way of getting rid of yourself, if you survive the trap-trail."

"Aye," mused the giant.

Black Harris came in. He flung himself off his horse, and threw down a beaver.

"Lookie thar! Ketched the big medicine chief himself, I did! Wagh! Only one paw for trap. My medicine are strong today."

They examined curiously. The beaver—unusually large—had lost three of his legs; he retained one forepaw. An odd spectacle he was, denuded and smooth-bellied, worn of broad yellow incisors and grizzled of chops, but surprisingly plump.

"Seal fat," said Thompson. "Queer how the poor devil made shift."

"He was an old bach, cached in a hole of his own. Reckon no she'd have any thing to do with sech a critter, for fear he couldn't rustle an' support a fam'ly," proclaimed the jubilant Harris. "So he jest set up his own lodge, under the bank, an' acted as chief counselor, an' other beaver fetched him presents. How's sign whar you've been?"

"Still good," Glory replied. "Fur in plenty."

"Hell in plenty, then, say I," grumbled Harris. "Hyar's a coon as mixes his likker. Whenever he's give a swig o' good times, he suspicions wuss. Thar's brown skin about, I bet ye."

"No!" exclaimed Thompson. "Near?"

"Nigh or fur, I'm goin' to eat," Harris stated. "I'm wolfish. Let's chaw, else why do beaver have tails?"

THEY squatted around the fire and pot; and served by the two women, they ate of boiled beaver-tail, white and succulent; of the rich beaver liver, and of venison, all stewed together and ladled out into wooden bowls. The baby, fat and thriving, guzzled upon strips of fat and gristle.

Night was closing about. The fire laid its magic circle-within which the darkness dared not venture. In the outer world an owl hooted tremulously; the slap of a beaver's tail upon the water cracked like a gunshot. The three men, at ease, pulled pipes and stuffed them, and gravely puffed.

"I see a moccasin-track," Harris abruptly remarked.

"Aye? Whose sign?"

"That I can't exac'ly tell. But didn't

smell friendly. It was a consider'ble spell below hyar, whar somebody'd planted hoof in mud, accidental, whilst crossin' the creek."

"Fresh?"

"Toler'ble. Mornin' fresh, anyhow. Mought have been jest passin' on, but thar's brown skin about, or I don't know Injun."

"*Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis,*" the Britisher quoted, as if to the fire. He sat bulky and imperturbable, hugging his knees and reflecting the flames.

Black Harris gawked, wary of strange words. Thompson laughed bitterly.

"Pluto in these parts is red. For the open gate of his Hell, substitute the Inferno of the Blackfeet. That's trapper Latin."

"Say it ag'in," Harris bade.

With amused twinkle in his blue eyes, the Britisher repeated.

"Ow-owgh!" Harris commented. "Ute or 'Rapaho?"

"Why?"

"Must be one or t'other. I can talk Sioux, Snake, Crow, Gros Vent', Nepercy an' Flathead. Got a smatter o' Blackfoot an' 'Ree. But I never did lay my sights on 'Rapaho or Ute. 'Rapaho haint more'n a hundred words, an' thar don't one fit in a white man's mouth. Other Injuns have to use signs in order to talk with 'Rapahos. What's the float sign?"

"Merely said that the Hades of black Pluto is always open, Harris."

"Wagh!" approved Harris. "Oughter to understand that in any language. Mought have been a Blackfoot track, but 'twasn't hisn."

"Whose?"

"That chief you mentioned: Pehta."

"Oh! Pehta."

"Yep. War Eagle, the same as the Crows were yellin' about that time we lost hoss an' beaver last winter an' you picked up yore imp plunder."

"Never met him, myself."

"When you do, you'll know him. He's a cuss, Pehta are. Bigger man nor you, an' got only one peeper. 'Leborny' is 'nother handle to him. Lead or steel wont tech him, Injuns say, account his medicine. Head war-chief o' the Blackfeet, he are—or same as; an' if that don't make him chief o' Hades, why was Blackfeet invented? Ow-owgh! You don't need to talk Ute or 'Rapaho to tell about ary Pehta."

"Pluto," the giant murmured. "Le Borgne, you say? Right."

"Ute be dinged!" Harris asserted. "I say 'Pehta,' an' 'Leborny,' an' that's Blackfoot for War Eagle an' One-Eye sartin as my gun shoots center. Now this chil' goin' to hole up for the night."

THEY all turned in: the flaxen giant, the Nez Percé and the babe in their lodge; Thompson, Harris and his squaw in their brush-and-hide shelter. The night passed uneventful. At break of day the Britisher was out, for his eccentric ablution.

As crazy as an otter he was! And he was standing stark naked and glowing and glistening, when his ear caught a rustle.

One leap carried him to his rifle. Behold now a yellow-haired white savage of the Saxon race, his every sense attuned to animal instinct for defense of hut and family! Then there was a threshing, and a crashing, and a strange medley of oaths remonstrant, and a thump.

Black Harris picked himself up from his fall out of a tree. He glared, challenging the somnolent world of trunk and leaf and stream, and bare giant soberly observing but aquiver from the revelation.

"Wagh!" Harris exclaimed. "Hyar's do-in's."

"*Facilis descensus Avernus.*" Eh, Harris? That's more lingo to cogitate on."

The level tone of this Mad Britisher, who never was understandable, aggrieved. Harris resented the imputation.

"Census, nothin'!" he grumbled. "I dreamt Injuns, an' I climbs a tree, savin' scalp. Must have been thar some heap time, too. Thought I'd lost gun, hoss, beaver, squaw" (he had enumerated in due order of value), "an' old one-eye Pehta himself was trailin' my ha'r. Ow-owgh! Thar's Injun about, for I never dreamt wrong. Don't need to take no census, this coon don't. He can cogitate plenty from one moccasin track."

Whereupon Harris, burly and muttering, resought the camp; and donning his buckskins the Britisher followed.

THE two women were astir, cooking breakfast. Thompson sat watching. The baby still slept among the robes of the lodge. Day had dawned fair and friendly. Could a day of this signature and breathing innocence halt the sun in orbit just to spit venom upon one small spot sequestered in a thousand square miles of country freely offered? There was the great and cheery sun in a sky benign; and

there was the moccasin-track in the recumbent earth. A single track like that had spoiled a day before.

But traps had to be run.

"At fust crack o' gun, make for camp, do ye hear?" Harris bade.

"Or up a tree!"

They separated, each upon his appointed route, and left the peaceful camp to the two women, the baby, the contented pack-animals, the quick sunshine, and the hoops of beaver-skin constantly renewed from the graining blocks.

How pleasant such an estate, in retrospect! How lovely all the day before!

The Britisher had tethered his gray, and on foot had run three traps. The gods were benevolent: they had allotted to every trap a beaver, and he wondered if this could be the Greeks bearing gifts. Aye, but the stream was yielding famously.

He was half a mile from camp, and working upstream, when first he saw a tinge of bank soil—a little thread of rotted leaf and freshly dislodged twig floating down in the current. He stopped, cautious and keen, pent of breath, to mark, listen, read. By a sign even so small as this, impended life or death. No anomaly—the roiling of a stream, the snapping of a twig, the snort of a horse, the uneasiness of a buffalo herd—could be overlooked in a country that belonged to all men.

Beaver? Scarcely, at that hour. Deer? Yes, a deer might have crossed above, or have drunk from the water's edge. Curse the moccasin-track of Black Harris! It was poisoning the day—it threatened the tranquillity of these dappled glades like a sown crop of dragon's teeth.

Then, as with thumb again upon gun cock, and heart thumping, and ears strained, he abruptly stepped aside by an intuitive impulse unrecognized, there was twang of bowstring, instant hiss of feathered shaft as mean and sudden as the strike of a shedding, treacherous snake. At the crack of his piece responsive to an eruption of tawny forms (the crop of dragon's teeth!) Inferno opened. He fired again. That second barrel was his deadly joke. Pursued by death whoop and missile he tore for his horse, loading as he ran.

He was first to his gray, or where his gray should be; but the fell clamor, the very excitement pulsant in the air, had set the brute to plunging. Before his eyes it reared free, and whirling about, was off,

upon course uncertain. He whistled. It halted, turned, stood trembling. And he panted up to it, sprang aboard, pointed it aright—urging, anon threatening backward, careered through brush and amid timber for the defense of wife and babe.

Bullet and arrow outstripped him. So had an Indian. He broke from the border of the little park into a scene calamitous. The old Crow squaw was scurrying for cover. The Nez Percé girl had seized the baby—a half-naked warrior, astride of flying horse, dashed upon her, with blow of bow and snatch of arm wrested the baby from her, was away again, risking bullet behind the shield of the child.

No, not alone! The horse had stumbled, the active girl, with a bound, was clenched to his extended tail. A great leap, and she was upon his croup; as he straightened, her hand rose and fell, plying her knife. They three—the baby, the savage, the girl—pitched off together, and the horse galloped on.

Charging madly through, to finish the job if necessary, Glory was conscious of Black Harris' stentorian yell, Thompson's rabid halloo, the reports of rifle and pistol, the furor of retreating battle; and as he checked, to tumble down and glare about, with his family at his feet, silence enclosed—trespassed upon only by the wailing of the frightened Crow woman and the gasping of the Nez Percé girl, who, reddened knife still gripped, knelt at bay beside the marauder's body, the crying child in her arms.

SHE looked up and smiled entreatingly, no longer tigerish.

"Not hurt. See me, Yellow Buffalo. My knife was strong. The dog is dead."

"Dawn Star is brave," he said.

"She is a Nimipu" (Nez Percé) "and the wife of a chief. Now take the scalp. The baby shall play with it, and the ghosts of the Dakotah will weep."

He gave another glance to the body of the Indian. It was indeed not a Blackfoot, but a young Sioux—moreover, one of the young Sioux with whom they had camped last Christmas.

Now came Black Harris, boisterous, and Thompson, ardent and exalted, cantering in upon mounts restive with the heat of combat.

"Whoopee! Another thrown cold!"

"Aye," the giant replied soberly.

"Yours? No!" Thompson uttered. "He

still has his hair but I see a red knife. What's the sign, by that?"

"He'd grabbed the baby. I was afraid to shoot. The Dawn Star caught him as he tried to make off. There he is."

"By the great horn spoon, gave him Green River proper, did she!" exclaimed Harris. "Wagh! She's a ha'r o' the black b'ar in her, she has! Now I say! A Sioux, sartin. What I s'picioned, by their yelps."

"We heard your gun and came fast," Thompson explained. "They didn't seem bent on a fight. Hello! We've seen this fellow before. I remember his hooked nose and his paint."

"So do I."

"I'll spile his looks for him, if nobody else will," averred Harris. He swung to earth, tore off the scalp. And he continued testily: "They wasn't after ha'r or hosses. They was after the baby. That baby draws Injuns like a carcass draws buzzards. Our camp's known, an' we can't stay hyar. It's up traps, pack fixin's an' cache som'er's else. Whar's my squaw?"

That was sound reasoning. Blood called for blood—and the girl hugged the baby. So this they did: they lifted their traps in haste while the two women packed; they abandoned these once genial precincts to the homeless ghost of the Sioux forever wandering in limbo, to the cold ashes in the circle of shuddersome trees, and to the tinkle of the stream singing, "Beaver, beaver, beaver."

Fur perhaps waited in another stream. Black Harris led; old Glory, the Nez Percé and babe, the chattering Crow squaw, Thompson (gloomy again), followed with the packs. But they did not find other water so much to their liking.

CHAPTER VII

"SOMEWHERE IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS"

THE so-called Mad Britisher sat at ease before his lodge, and smoked his pipe. Summer drenched the beaver country. The spring trapping season had ended; all trails had converged to market rendezvous of buckskin and blanket, pack and bale, in this Valley of the Green just west of the Continental Divide whose leviathan back severed the waters of the Gulf from the waters of the Pacific.

Here, upon the Pacific slope of a Wyoming yet to be, the Green River head-

waters of the cañoned Colorado, issuing from the scarred flanks of the Wind River Mountains, soon laved the vitals of a wide and lovely bottomland. The rod of some Moses had achieved a miracle, for the surrounding regions were sterile and forbidding.

The miracle multiplied. As if fecundated by water and sun, the valley now had suddenly teemed to life and action bizarre. Half a thousand lodges defiled this sod left innocent through almost a year; two thousand horse animals grazed upon the rich pasturage; animals jaw-thonged or bitted dashed wildly hither and thither, inspired by wild riders; a concourse of men, women, children and dogs strolled, swaggered, lounged, worked, played, ate, drank, gamed, fought—sang, screeched, yelled, barked, while the smokes of the inevitable fires wafted bluely into the blue above.

There were smooth-faced men in blankets and robes and black braids; their skin was coppery. There were hairy-faced and seamy-faced men in fringed buckskins and head-coverings nondescript; their skin, where unweathered, was white. And there were men whose moods shared the traits of both. But all the women were red women, and all the children were black-eyed.

BEFORE his lodge pitched wisely upon a well-drained little swell, the blond giant's lazy eyes surveyed from the Wind River peaks to Pilot Butte, and traveled in, with casual pauses, over all that broke the nearer aspects. What more could man desire? A lodge, a good woman, a child around, sun, meat, grass, water, entertaining fellowship—

Quite three hundred of 'em, his mates, this time, he dared say. The reunion was complete. Carson and Cross Eagle had come in from the Salt Lake and beyond, where they had almost starved to death. Bridger, Mariano, Markhead, from the Three Forks where they had almost lost their hair to the Blackfeet. Kelly had been nearly wiped out by the Sioux in the Bull Pen south of the Laramie, but had saved mule and beaver. Glory himself, Thompson and Black Harris had trailed from God knew where, and had little to show.

Old Bill Williams, of the *Punch* visage and of clothing greased by repeated wipings of his butcher-knife, was here, after

his lone year in his favorite Ute country. Joe Meek was here, and Doc Newell, Fraeb the German, Gervais the Frenchman, La Bonté and Killbuck his partner, Jake Hawken, Vasquez the Spaniard, the Lajeunesse brothers Basil and François, Pegleg Smith, the burly ruffian dangerous in his cups, Jim Beckwourth the mulatto Crow chief, Rube Herring, who once caught a grizzly in his beaver trap, "Long" Hatcher, Sinclair of Arkansas, the Shawnee Spieback, Tom Hill and Jonas the Delaware, Milt Sublette (and Cap'n Billy Sublette was expected), Andy Drips the trader, big Shunan the Nor'west bully and a delegation of other Hudson's Bay Company Canadians from the west, and so forth and so forth.

But ranks had been depleted. Guthrie had been killed by lightning, Ponto the Portuguese by a caved-in cache, Alexander, Montgomery, Frazer the Iroquois, Antoine Godin the 'breed, Richards of Tennessee, Laforey (don't forget Laforey), by the Blackfeet, and Baptiste Ménard crippled and forced out; several others had been killed by the Sioux; still others had been drowned, or scalped by grizzlies. Thus mounted the yearly toll. But what was death? Man lived, until bullet, arrow, knife, heat, cold, storm, hunger, thirst, fang and claw, earth and water, put an end to him. He lived fighting and he died fighting; and he vanished.

DOWN there the talk was all of hair, fur and Injuns. It was a motley assemblage—no buccaneers upon tropic clay could have been more varied; and, for the South Sea Islanders, one had here the Nez Percés and the Flatheads with their goodly horse-herds and their gay blankets, the Pend' d'Oreilles with their shell ornaments strung from ears and arms, the dark squat Utes, the stately Crows of trailing hair and white robes, the Wind River Snakes—most warlike of the Shoshones and firm friends of the white man, east of the mountains, as the Nez Percés, the Flatheads and Pend' d'Oreilles, west of the mountains.

Yes, it was good to be here, remote from England, remote from the States, remote from everything forgotten.

Trading was brisk. The Hudson's Bay men had opened their packs. Vasquez had brought goods from Santa Fe, Andy Drips from St. Louis, Fontanelle of the American Fur Company was expected—late as usual. The impromptu "stores," of merely a

counter under temporary awning, were accumulating beaver, otter, mink, buffalo robes, in exchange for alcohol at four dollars, sugar six dollars, coffee seven dollars, powder four dollars, by the pint; butcher knives were two dollars, axes six dollars tobacco three dollars a plug, blankets twelve dollars: all in trade for beaver at four or five dollars the plew or skin. Of what use was money to a man in the mountains?

Tom Fitzpatrick of Bridger's fur company was due any day with more goods. Old Glory rather waited for that—he was free trapper, but he had promised his furs to Bridger. Meanwhile his wife was happy, visiting among her people; the babe, sloe-eyed little rascal, was happy because well-fed; he himself, asking nothing beyond that which he had, was happy also, and content.

Now a striking figure came riding aswagger, with jargon of oath and tipsy song, and aggressive glances right and left from high head.

A STALWART, strapping fellow, he, name of Shunan. Of the Hudson's Bay Company recruits from the Old Nor'west *voyageurs* and *coureurs de bois* and trappers; one who proclaimed himself *homme du nord*, cock o' the woods, white Indian, best at fight and frolic, what not? A camp ruffler and dandy—and be damned to him!

Appareled to "shine," he was, for the eyes of squaw and brave, and ignorant whites, Shunan's black locks hung, sleekly greased, to his waist; the hairs of his swarthy cheeks and chin had been plucked out with tweezers; those same olive cheeks were painted with vermilion, and above the bold black eyes a crimson handkerchief with floating ends confined his unctuous ringlets, in which was tied bright flannel.

Shunan sat a spotted horse daubed, Indian fashion, with vermilion and clay white and blue, mane and tail and forelock plaited with flannel and gay feather, and the quilled buckskin cover of the brass-studded gun under his leg was hung with "medicine."

He checked his song; he yelped and thumped his broad chest and reining with the bridle-thong just in time, he stared down upon old Glory and the pipe of peace. His eyes were bloodshot and impudent.

"Where you' purty leetle squaw?"

"Not here," replied old Glory.

The eyes briefly roved.

"Dat lucky. *Eh bien!* Some day I tek you' *jolie* squaw." He glared. "Mebbe you teenk you beeg man, *hein?*"

The other responded easily.

"I don't think."

"By gar, den! You one beeg man, I, Shunan, anodder. I, Shunan, am Nor'-wester, *homme du nord, coq o' de wood*. I crow." And crow he did. "Who answer? You? I will fight you for you' squaw."

Glory shook his head, and puffed.

"No, thank you."

"Eh? *Sacré nom du diable!* Mebbe Americans no fight for deir woman. Dey are less dan dogs. But I tek her when I get ready. Come, now, beeg man. We are two. Let us fight with our feests and see which is better. *Moi*, I am best man in dees camp, but I gif you chance. *Marchez vous*, so all can see."

"I'm not fighting today. Too comfortable, Shunan," quoth Glory. "You can fight somebody else. Get away. You're blocking the view."

The Nor'-wester surveyed. Truly a big man, a worthily big man, offensive in his blondness, his inches and his possessions and his ease, sprawled before him. Then he said, "Bah! Anodder time," and with a whoop breaking his horse into curvet and caracole, he rode on, seeking quarrel elsewhere.

A dangerous child, this Shunan. Some day he would be killed.

Thompson of the chestnut beard presently approached and with mechanical "How!" sat down.

"Fitzpatrick's near the South Pass, with the goods," he blurted. "An express has just come in to tell Bridger. What's more, Fitz has missionaries again, for Oregon."

"Aye?"

"He picked them up at Fort William on the Laramie Fork—Sublette's post. Fontanelle had brought 'em that far, from the Council Bluffs. They'll likely go on from rendezvous with the Flatheads. Shall we go on, too? It's the chance. They'll get through. What do you say?"

"What chance, Tommy?"

"To quit. I've been talking with Chief Rotten Belly of the Nez Percés, and with old Insala of the Flatheads. They're ripe for what they call the Book; they want the white men and the white man's God. Insala says the Flatheads knew these white men were coming. I don't know how they

knew, but they did. The Flatheads will protect them and send them on clear to Walla Walla at the Columbia, or to Vancouver. I've been talking with Hudson's Bay men, too. A dram or so loosened their tongue. That all is a fine country, a white man's country, a white woman's country."

"Still, why change, Tommy?"

"Why change? A fellow can have peace, there, Glory. Those Pacific Injuns are friendly; a man can live on the land. It's bound to be settled by whites. You and I can be as good as the best. In here—" and Thompson exclaimed passionately: "My God! We're as bad as the worst."

"You've been drinking, Tommy."

"Not much. And I'm done with that. I've pelts left, and I mean to sell them for money and a new outfit. Then Oregon. This is my last rendezvous, Glory. I've carried the cross; now I follow it." He was in another of his exalted states. "Let's pull out together, and *live*."

"I follow the beaver," quoth the giant. "This life suits."

"Beaver! They're making hats of silk, I've told you; beaver will soon be down to a dollar a plew. The beaver trade is doomed; and if you and I stay in the mountains, we're doomed too. What's the average life of a beaver trapper? Four years. And then what? Nothing. He is bones in soil he doesn't own. That's his end no matter when he dies. You and I are poor, after all our slaving. We'll always be poor. But in Oregon we'll be rich with half the work. It's the promised land. Shall we go?"

HE lapsed into silence, the flame of ambitious prophecy suddenly burnt out within him.

"One of the new men is a physician, by name Whitman," he said. "The other's the Reverend Parker, a minister of the Gospel."

"Aye? Physicians both. They'll find more souls diseased, here, than bodies," the giant murmured.

Thompson fidgeted for a moment, helpless in his agony of zeal. Then, muttering, he sprang to his feet and lurched away.

Fresh turbulence was spreading through the rendezvous. Bridger, Carson, Black Harris and other mountain-men galloped out for the south; there went the Indians, band after band, in kindred wild charge. The Fitzpatrick caravan had been sighted.

It was bringing more alcohol, more blankets, more gewgaws—but especially more alcohol—and the missionaries.

Guns popped in the distance, lavishing the powder of welcome. And after due time the caravan, attended by riotous escort, forded the New Fork in the east and wended its way up the wide Valley of the Green—the heavily laden pack-mules shambling in a long line skirted by the outriders.

The Indians dashed forward. Rifle and fusil volleyed again, from march and camp. There were whoop, yelp and hooray. Fitzpatrick and Bridger led in, closely followed by two men, ahorse, in sober black. Amid tumult and jostling the mules were unpacked.

In front of his lodge the flaxen giant deliberately restuffed his pipe. The missionaries were not for him; of no interest to him the gossip, and the latest news from the world of St. Louis, the United States, the trail thereto, or the trail to Thompson's chimera of an Oregon awaiting. His only concern was the price of beaver, in goods. Bridger had promised that Fitz would bid high for prime skins; yet maybe not, for now this was the last caravan of the year, confound it! Anyhow, sell eventually for one price, or sell for another, a man with a few packs could equip for the trail again if he let the cursed alcohol alone.

THE sun was about to set behind the rugged west. Here came the Nez Percé woman his wife, and the baby upon her back. With gentle word she deposited the baby—she crooned a little song of content as she applied herself to fire and kettle and supper, for the day had been good to her. All her relations were there in the Nez Percé camp.

"Black-shirt men come with Bad Hand, bringing the white God," she ventured. "My people glad. Flatheads glad. Men go on, taking God beyond the mountains."

"Yes," said he. It was aptly put, in her simplicity. God might have place beyond the mountains in the one direction or the other; His rôle did not extend over this limbo where the gods were beaver, powder, and whisky.

"Everybody happy," she prattled. "My people say for me to go too, with them and white-God men. You go?"

"Does Dawn Star go?" he asked.

"Dawn Star is the Yellow Buffalo's wife," she answered proudly. "She keeps his lodge. She does not leave him. If he goes, she goes. If he stays, she stays."

"We will hunt the beaver," he responded.

"All right," she smiled. "My people say this not my baby. Give it to them. It bad medicine for me. I say it my baby and my *hama's* baby. He is great chief; he can tell me of the white God." And she added, in her scanty English: "You bet."

Fitzpatrick and one of the two black-coats had emerged from the roil—Bridger was pointing them forward; they continued across the trampled sward, with their shadows cast long behind them.

"Bad Hand and God-man," the girl announced. "Come here."

Here? Looked like it. He rose as they arrived and halted; he could do no less, for he was white and this was his home.

Fitzpatrick nodded, with an easy "How!" He stood for a moment hesitant, in his buckskins and his flat wool hat, the hand crippled by a rifle explosion hanging misshapen, and his hair, prematurely grayed from his travail in once saving it from the Blackfeet, contrasting with his ruddy Irish face. "Bad Hand," "Broken Hand," and "White Head" he was, to the beaver-trail and the Indian lodge.

He scanned Glory out of keen gray eyes.

"This gentleman is the Reverend Samuel Parker. Another missionary for the Columbia country. From New York State."

"Aye?" The blond giant looked upon the Reverend Parker—a small man, a wan, serious, ascetic man, past fifty—plainly a pious man whose cold blue eyes, noting all, and stern lineaments spoke disapproval, and whose word of God was burning upon his lips.

"Fact is," Fitzpatrick blurted, "he has a message for somebody like you. Bridger and I can't think of anyone else."

"For Mr. Ralph Stockbridge, an Englishman in the Western Territory," the Reverend Parker firmly stated, and still with mien accusing held out a letter.

The familiar slanting script of the address steadied into blazonry, blinding earth and sky, like a bolt thunder-spiced through the depths of night. The words, however, might have been all innocently penned—

*For Ralph Stockbridge, Esq.,
Somewhere in the Rocky Mountains.*

The ensuing chapters of this great epic of the West are even more fascinating. Be sure to read them in our forthcoming December issue.



The Unwilling Witness

Drama of the highest quality gives this remarkable story a power and an intensity seldom equaled in fiction. You will not soon forget it.

By STEUART M. EMERY

THIS was the scene onto which Officer Wilson stumbled after sending his motorcycle hurtling up the driveway of the Blaine place, sprawled on its hillock in the sheen of a Long Island summer moon: a tall-ceilinged room ranked with books, about the walls all the lights burning brightly; in the center a heavy table from one end of which papers, ornaments and a bronze lamp had been swept away as though by the gesture of some desperate hand; and—beside this table, crumpled and inert, the body of Boyd Blaine.

He lay huddled on his side, the once crisp front of his dress shirt crushed into ruin, a small stained hole under the heart telling its own story. His stiffening hands still clutched at the tapestry table-strip, which, together with everything on it, he had brought down when the shot had gone home. It had been a sudden thing—on his red-veined, domineering features there yet was stamped the sneer that had been their last expression. In unexpected death Boyd Blaine was no more pleasant than in life.

Standing by the window that gave onto

the terrace, Garret Hemingway watched to see what emotions would show on the officer's face. The muscles about his own mouth were a little taut, a little strained. He looked like a man who now had himself completely in hand after a tremendous shock. As in the case of the man on the floor, he was in informal evening dress, but here all resemblance ended. He was healthily tanned and cleanly built; there was about him no trace whatever of the reckless living that had marked the other. He met his questioner's gaze coolly.

Officer Wilson had exhibited practically no surprise on entering the room. Not only was he of phlegmatic constitution, but a fright-shaken voice over the telephone had given clear intimation of what he would find on arriving. He was therefore proceeding to the task of making inquiries with businesslike promptness.

"This is murder, all right. Who did it?"

"That," remarked Hemingway, "I shall leave to the police to judge."

"And who are you?"

"My name is Hemingway. I am Mr. Blaine's business partner."

The officer's eyes flickered. "Oh, are you?" His tone indefinably carried meaning. "I've read today's papers."

"The papers are correct," returned Hemingway levelly. "I have just arrived from a year abroad to find that Mr. Blaine has plunged away our business and cost a good many people the money they invested with us. I came out here for a conference with him tonight. And now"—his hand indicated the quiet figure on the floor—"this!"

WHILE Hemingway was speaking, Wilson had bent down an instant looking at the body. But Hemingway sensed none the less that had he made a move toward door or window the officer would have turned like a flash.

"You will find the revolver on the rug under that end of the table," he said quietly. "Is there anything further you would like to know?"

"Who was in here with him when he was shot?"

"I was."

"Then you shot him?"

This was the question which, Hemingway knew, would be asked before a police officer had been many minutes in that room where destruction had blazed out a scant half-hour ago. He continued to look squarely at the newcomer. In the silence he could almost hear the incisive tones of the prosecution summing up, the little tense gasps that run through a courtroom when a man's life hangs on a thread. His lips tightened.

"I do not intend to answer that question," he said—and saw the flash of what he realized must come emerging from the officer's pocket.

"In that case I'm putting these on you. You've practically asked for 'em. The sergeant and a couple more men are on their way up now. I'll just stay here with you till they arrive."

Hemingway's glance fell to the thin circles of steel that had snapped about his wrists. It is not given very often to a man of his type to wear them. They should have felt cold, but instead they felt burning, searing, branding. By what mad freak of passion had they come to him? Clearly, too clearly, he saw himself as he had stood on the deck of the liner that morning, confronted by a circle of reporters. Did he know that the brokerage firm of Blaine and Hemingway had failed the night before? Did he know that the courts were demand-

ing its books, that its doors were being stormed by its defrauded clients? What did he have to say about it? Some one shoved into his hands a newspaper whose black headlines were like a physical blow. With silence on his lips he had forced his way to a taxicab and shaken off the pursuit. In the office on every face the news had met him. By fast motor he had rushed the miles to see Blaine here in this house, the very Blaine whose heavy-lidded eyes now stared sightlessly upward. He had always disliked Blaine; since tonight he had hated him.

The three of them at dinner—Blaine, his wife Amedée, and himself: not a word spoken about the crash with which Wall Street still was echoing; only a strained silence under which the tension grew and grew. Twice Blaine with a snarl wrenching his lips had battered down the quiet words of his wife. Amedée's delicate face had gone paler each time; her wide black eyes had shadowed until they were pools of misery.

Hemingway had found Amedée for a moment alone in the hallway after dinner.

"I am seeing Blaine on our failure in half an hour," he said. "I am giving him time to get himself together after what he's been putting into himself all day. He has changed none, then, since I went abroad?"

Her head went back. In the twilight her beauty haunted him as something ethereal, something too fine almost for contact with the world's crudities.

"He has changed if at all," came slowly from her, "completely for the worse. You can't stop him now—no one can. He is ungovernable. He is worse with me than any rotter that ever lived—he is a savage sometimes."

Hemingway was glad that the shadows hid his face. This woman who had married Blaine must never know what she meant to him, had meant to him almost from the day of their first meeting. He drew in his breath sharply.

"I cannot go on like this," she whispered. "Something—anything must be done to end it. Promise me that you'll not go away again, wont you?"

"I promise," he said. To her he would have promised anything. The very thing that he had gone away to avoid might happen any second now in this half-lit hall. Her eyes were shining; he caught the tiny quiver that ran through her. But she was

thoroughbred, would not permit herself an instant's weakening.

"I promise you also that I will attend to him," he said in a voice hard despite himself. She was gone in a flutter of white. The terrace lay at the end of the hall beyond the open door, and on this terrace Hemingway had walked, while a strange, new emotion beat at his brain.

HE looked now for a second time at the bonds that fettered his wrists. Upstairs in her room, a still figure flung on the tumbled covers of her bed, lay Amedée. That he knew, for he had seen her there, eyes closed, breathing in gasps that went to the roots of him. There was more of tragedy in this house tonight than a shooting. The police officer, who had found himself a cigar in the silver-topped humidor, was regarding him through a comfortable cloud of smoke. It was his job to arrest the person who had done the shooting, and he seemed satisfied.

Once more a picture framed itself before Hemingway's eyes. This time he was not on the terrace but in the room where he now sat. Blaine's face rose before him convulsed with fury—the face of a man in whom power has degenerated into cruelty, lips drawn back, eyes aflame: a man whom years of living for his own pleasures, reckless of any price that must be paid, had brought to the point where in anger he would stop at nothing. Blaine had towered in the center of the room, cursing him blindly, while slowly an icy rage such as he had never known formed within Hemingway. And then—He put the thing that followed out of his mind with a tremendous effort. Footsteps had sounded just outside the door. The police sergeant was entering.

OFFICER WILSON explained in a few words and received a grunt of commendation. The sergeant also inspected the body.

"You have nothing to say?" he shot at Hemingway. "Mind you, it can be used against you."

"Nothing," said Hemingway calmly.

"I thought not. —Here, you!"

He jabbed the words at a frightened figure in the dress of a servant, who stood between the two attendant policemen. "Tell me again in front of this gentleman what you heard and saw. Waters, you take it down."

The servant spoke rapidly, almost gulping it out. "I heard Mr. Blaine and the gentleman there quarreling. After that I heard a shot. I—I didn't come out for a while, and when I did, I met Mr. Hemingway at the foot of the stairs. He told me Mr. Blaine was dead and to telephone the police."

The sergeant shot a look of inquiry at Hemingway.

"Mr. Hemingway was alone in the room with Mr. Blaine all evening?"

"Yes sir. I heard no one else, sir."

"That's enough for now. We'll want you later. Wilson, you and Doane take the prisoner down to the station. The car's outside. You know what charge to enter against him."

"Is it murder?" inquired Hemingway. There was no quiver in his voice.

"That's what it is," returned the sergeant. "Did you expect it would be petty larceny?" Rewarded by a tactful tittering among his subordinates, he became cheerful. "Where's Mrs. Blaine, you there, the butler? I guess I'd like her views on this."

He had not seen until this moment the slender figure that was in the doorway. The white of her gown had color compared to her face. Amedée Blaine had come down from upstairs. One hand went up with a strange, childlike gesture to touch her lips. She wore also the dull look of a child suddenly awakened from sleep and hardly yet recognizing anything about it. Hemingway's glance went arrowing to her on the instant.

"What—what is this?"

"Your husband has been shot, ma'am," said the sergeant gruffly, but none the less with a swift change toward sympathy. "I think you had better not come in. I'd like to ask you a few questions outside."

"My husband—dead?" She swayed a little. "My—my head, it is, I think. I—I can't quite understand. I want a moment."

She closed her eyes, half-leaning against the side of the door; Hemingway saw then that the lids were earthen gray, the tinge of suffering. Presently she opened them, and they were dark with sudden terror. Realization had come to her. Her glance flashed from the floor by the table to the handcuffs on Hemingway's wrists. The sergeant voiced her thought.

"Yes ma'am. He's the one who did it."

"No!" she cried. "No—no! He couldn't

have. He—I—*oh!*" Her accents were breaking. Hemingway spoke, coolly yet gently, as though to put into her mind in words that would spare, the thing that had happened. Yet tenseness threaded the quiet of his voice.

"You were upstairs when it came about. You have been upstairs for almost an hour—you had better go back there now. You can do nothing for Blaine. The whole thing is beyond your hands."

"Then he is dead? He really is dead?" She uttered the words almost tonelessly, oblivious to the presence of witnesses. "I suppose it is terrible, but—I think everyone knows what he was like to me."

Even the sergeant looked away. He knew that this fragile woman with the pain-stricken eyes had had a merciful deliverance. That, however, had nothing to do with his duty.

"He struck me—tonight," she said in low horror. "That is why I can't seem to think things out. I know he's dead, and I know, I know—Garret, they're taking you away!"

"Yes," he said.

"But they mustn't—they can't! Tell them that you didn't shoot him. Tell them that you didn't! It's all some horrible mistake. They'll let you go."

She saw on the faces about her a stolid denial. Hemingway moved a little, in spite of his efforts to keep still, and the faint click of steel came again. It was this one small sound which, perhaps, told more than anything else. The group were in the hall proceeding toward the open door, beyond which stood the police motor. She flung out a hand. The sergeant stopped.

"I must have a word with Mr. Hemingway by ourselves," she said, fighting fiercely for composure and almost attaining it. Her throat was throbbing and her face a pallid, twitching mask. "This is still my house. I am the woman whose husband was shot. I demand it."

"I will give my word that I shall make no move to get away," said Hemingway evenly. "After all, Officer, she will be a witness on your side."

The sergeant directed a keen glance at the pair, and nodded, stationing himself a short distance away. His men moved to the door and to the stairs. Hemingway and the woman stood surrounded by a circle which in another moment would again close in.

"Did you do it?" she breathed.

His eyes searched her face. It was strained, tormented, but that was all he read in it. It was enough.

"Amedée," he said levelly, "there is no use in my making answer to that."

"Garret!" In the single cry she had told all. The quiet figure in the room to the left was nothing—the living figure who stood before her everything. In some way, any way, Hemingway must stop the words that were coming to her lips, bar from alien gaze the betraying agony of her eyes. His voice rose calmly.

"At your service, Sergeant."

He did not glance behind him as he was escorted out of the door into the tranquil summer night. Had he done so he would have seen a drooping figure limned under the light of the hall, in its eyes, following him to the end, a look that had but a single meaning. Behind her stood the sergeant in an attitude of satisfaction. The prosecution would have a strong case.

THAT was also the opinion of Cathcart when he came to pay his visits to Hemingway. The law had functioned smoothly to date with arrest, the corner cell in the little brick building behind the Old Manauket courthouse, and indictment by the Grand Jury. Even now while Hemingway looked out onto a flat sweep of grass bordered by ancient, whispering elms, the machinery was running in full motion.

Cathcart moved restively about the cell. Concern and exasperation stood out plainly on his firmly molded face. In years of a long friendship Hemingway had never seen that expression so pronounced.

"Look here," said Cathcart abruptly. "Are you trying to strap yourself in the electric chair? Damn it, man, you can offer a case of self-defense that will stand up under any amount of hammering. We can hold up Boyd Blaine for what he was with a mass of evidence that ought to make any jury vote a certificate of merit to the man who removed him. I won the Holden case on about half what we can put before the court. I think that you've gone crazy."

A little leaner than when he had stepped into this cell a month before, Hemingway smiled at his lawyer.

"We'll leave Blaine's character out of it, Cathcart. It is no use throwing mud into a dead man's grave. He lived a rotten life and he's out of it. Let him lie."

"You mean that it will smirch the liv-

ing?" shot Cathcart at him. "Mrs. Blaine will be one of our best witnesses as soon as the prosecution gets through with her. She admits Blaine struck her the night of the shooting. That's why she collapsed after they brought you down here. If Blaine did it then, he may have done it before. Man, can't you see what ideas I can put into a jury's heads on that basis?"

"We shall also leave Mrs. Blaine out of our calculations," said Hemingway. "Why go over all this again? She will be the prosecution's witness, not mine. I refuse, I tell you, to let you put her on the stand and drag her private life with Blaine out of her."

"Why the devil did you employ me for your lawyer?" demanded Cathcart hotly.

Hemingway shrugged his shoulders. "You're one of the best in New York City. And besides, you'd never forgive me if I hadn't turned to you. Anything else? Don't be so hasty-tempered among friends on a hot day."

"You utter idiot!" almost shouted Cathcart. "All you've done is smash to pieces every plan I've proposed that will give you a chance. Can't I wake you up to what the situation is? You're not on trial for speeding a motor. It's for your life—do you understand that?"

"Yes," said Hemingway. His eyes wandered beyond the sweep of grass outside the window to the long ribbon of road beckoning away to the free blue of the horizon. He tapped at one of the cell bars with his finger. "I understand exactly what I am up against. I am doing my best, however, not to think about it. I do not believe that they will give me the extreme penalty."

CATHCART wiped little glints of perspiration from his face. It was incredible, this stand of Hemingway's. It was also perfectly incredible that Garret Hemingway should have shot a man.

"I don't believe you did for Blaine. I never have," he broke out.

"Don't let's discuss that. Here I am."

Cathcart paused. "There's one wild chance I am trying to make something big out of. Blaine had enemies."

"A great many of them."

"I don't want to raise your hopes, but I've stumbled on a possible line to put before the court. There was a stranger that night in the village asking for the Blaine place. Tall, shaggy gray hair, rather pe-

culiar eyes. Obviously under a strain. And I've found a boy who says he saw a man of this description crossing Blaine's lawn toward the house just before the shot was fired. The prosecution is using him, by the way, to help fix the time of the shooting—they seem to be putting on everybody inside ten miles."

"There was no one on the place that night," said Hemingway coolly. "I am quite certain of that. What do you hope to get out of it?"

"Blaine's plunging ruined hundreds. What would be more natural than that one ruined man, say a bit of a crank, should go out there to revenge himself? It has happened before in such cases—grounds for a reasonable doubt there. I'm working myself to the bone on it."

"Go ahead," said Hemingway. A little frown of thought appeared. What more natural indeed than that a warped brain should have dictated a night visit to the Blaine house? "Except the prosecution is sure to use the same motive of ruin against me. I'd say a person of that kind if he ever existed would be rather impossible of locating."

"Needle in the haystack," returned Cathcart succinctly. "I have him to go on, and your proposal to pay off the Blaine and Hemingway creditors a hundred cents on the dollar. I believe you said the first installment will be ready in about three weeks?"

HEMINGWAY nodded. "I think you're a fool twice over to throw your own money into it," said Cathcart stubbornly. "But I'll time it for our office to pay them off about the middle of your trial or whenever else seems most useful. That'll give public sentiment a chance to swing your way, just when we'll need it, on one thing anyhow." His voice assumed an almost pleading note. "You are absolutely determined, then, to throw away your best chance? You won't let me put Mrs. Blaine on the stand and the other witnesses to Blaine's past? Everybody knows he made life hell for her. Think what the newspapers'll do with it!"

"I have already answered that," declared Hemingway. "Positively and for the last time—no!"

Cathcart turned toward the door. The jailer stood outside with the key.

"I'll be going," he said sharply. "Keep on smiling, Garret old man."

AFTER he had left, Hemingway stood at the bars of the window until twilight deepened under the elms. In a few weeks more he would be on trial for his life. What he had said to Cathcart was the truth: he did not believe, he refused to believe, that they would give him the extreme penalty. No man in his position is ever willing to believe that. But he did fully expect that his life for years to come would be what it was like today, only far worse. When he came out, a broken thing, there would be no place for him in the world he knew. It was a heavy price to pay.

"But I'll pay it," he said half-aloud. "I'll pay it to the end. It will be worth it, every minute."

Fumbling in his pocket his fingers brought out a letter. He had never answered it, yet its words were burned on his brain. It was from Amedée Blaine. She had found a way for it to reach him, unseen by any other eyes.

"I know what you are suffering," she wrote. Did she? Could she realize it to the full? "I only want you to know that I am with you in this. I do not care what the world thinks—that I should hate the man who they say shot my husband. I shall never hate you, Garret."

Slowly he thrust the sheet away. He had cut himself off forever from Amedée Blaine since that night in the house on the hillock. He knew that she had recovered, but slowly, from the shock, that friends had taken her in, that she had tried to get word to him time and again. Steadily he had refused to send her a message. It would be better thus. But as the dragging days wore on, he could see in his thoughts only that delicate face with the small, curving lips—the face that was never meant to know anything but happiness and that never had known anything but misery.

IT was the week before the trial was to open and Cathcart had just gone, fuming more helplessly than ever, when the door of Hemingway's cell clicked suddenly open. Outside, the landscape was already darkening and in the tiny chamber it was growing dusk, splashed with the last radiance of sunset. He came abruptly to his feet, confronting a slender figure, deeply veiled and in heavy black. A trembling ran through every vein of him. His voice sounded almost brokenly.

"Amedée! Are you mad?"

She flung back the veil and defiance was in her gesture. Her face, pale almost as he had last seen it, and fine-drawn, was uplifted to him. Her hands went out in a quick motion.

"I had to see you, Garret," she said whisperingly. "You've tried to hold me off. But you couldn't."

"Here? In my cell?"

"It is nothing to me where they keep you. I would have come, wherever it was. Never mind how I have done it. No one will ever know."

"What do you want to say to me?" He was fighting himself, seeing her so close to him in those narrow bounds.

"Do you know what it has been like for me?" she was going on. "Day after day with everyone talking about you, discussing your chance for life as though it were some kind of a game! And all looking to me to do what I can to cost you that life! Boyd is dead, and the part of me that he killed is dead too. And I do not mean that you are to be taken away from me also. That is what I have come to say."

"It is madness," he repeated. "Amedée, you don't know what you are telling me."

"It is no madness. It is the truth. I will lie and trick and deceive when they put me on the stand. I will swear that you and I were together on the terrace when the shot was fired—there, or anywhere else you say. They may break my story down and I will go to prison too but I will have tried to the uttermost to save you."

"Amedée,"—Hemingway spoke vibrantly, fastening her smoldering eyes with his,—"listen to me. You were too ill to appear before the Grand Jury that indicted me—they found enough evidence without you. Your real story is still untold. So I will tell you what you will testify. I know the lines the State's questioning will follow. They will bring out from you among other things that your husband came to your room and in a mad rage struck you down. They will also learn from you that I appeared, that I turned on Blaine and said: 'I could kill you for this!' You heard me say that?"

"Yes," she murmured, "and then—and then I don't know what happened. It all went dark. The next thing the police were downstairs and they were taking you away. It's all so confused." Suddenly she trembled. "Garret, I'll never tell them that! No one knows it yet. It would doom you—those words."

"Yet you will speak them when you are asked."

Her lips twisted piteously. "But why—why—why?"

"Because I love you."

He was conscious as he spoke that he had played his last card—and won. A strange peace had descended on the woman's strained face. She smiled softly, tenderly. The ugly, barred scene seemed lightened by an inward glow.

"I love you also, Garret. It's a strange thing—isn't it? Never to be mentioned before and now it comes in a place like this. I will do anything that you ask me to do. I know now you are innocent. I am in your keeping."

"Then tell what you know when you take the stand. Amedée, will you believe that I am certain what is for the best?" His hands held hers; she felt herself swept by a direct, burning glance that overwhelmed all resistance. She only knew that for the moment her inner self was uplifted, soaring. Hemingway saw her shadowed eyes go misty and released her hands, speaking now with studied lightness.

"Cathcart is after a man who is supposed to have been prowling about the place that night. He expects to throw suspicion on him as a crack-brained investor coming to the house for revenge. A tall chap with long gray hair."

"And eyes that burned and burned," said Amedée as though to herself. "A wild face like a wolf's in the window."

"What is that?" said Hemingway, startled. The man existed, as far as he knew, only in Cathcart's optimism. "You could have seen no such person that night. You were upstairs in your room—unconscious."

"Then it must have—it must have been a dream," she said wearily. "I don't know what made me think of it. I want to forget all about that night—you there with those terrible things on your wrists—and the police—and everything."

As simply as a child she came over to him. "Hold me—just once," she said.

With an effort that shook him he put her from him. "No, Amedée. We must never think of that again. We know it is there. That is all. It is enough."

"Yes," she said softly, "I suppose it is enough. It is all we have—both of us—anyhow." There came a moment of silence while she watched the purpose growing in his face. "You're sending me away?"

"Now, Amedée. At once. But you will remember what I said?"

"I'll remember. You know what you want. But I'm frightened, Garret. I can't believe but that my words will mean destruction for you."

A low tapping sound came from beyond the door, evidently a warning of some kind.

"Good-by," said Hemingway, moving a little apart from her.

"I'll—I'll see you—"

"At the trial." Like a wraith she had slipped into the murk of the corridor. He had one last flashing glimpse of her white, eloquent features before the door swung to and he was alone in the dark with his thoughts.

"A wild face like a wolf's at the window," he repeated softly to himself. Then he clenched his hands together tightly. "Now what is that beginning to mean?"

OFFICER WILSON had testified. Sims the butler had testified. The sergeant had testified. A seemingly endless procession of other witnesses had testified. Hemingway rested one arm along the table assigned to the defense and let his eyes rove at random over the sweltering, tightly packed courtroom. "As unconcerned as a spectator dropped in for the day," one imaginative newspaper writer had described him. But under the mask of calmness a fierce, racking strain was beginning to form. It was no question now of shameful stripes and long years in a narrow cell—that idea had been delusion. Coolly, unemotionally, with the sure precision of a machine, the prosecutor was going about the business of demanding a life for a life. "We shall prove—" "the prosecution will show"—little phrases such as these had struck out in the State's opening, followed by the weaving together of bit after bit of evidence into a web in which no loop-hole appeared.

"He's out for nothing less than a first-degree conviction with a capital sentence," was Cathcart's summing up of Lewis, whose icy logic led the prosecution. "It's the biggest case that's ever broken in this county, and he's up for reappointment soon. He's going to stand or fall on it."

Hemingway watched him now. Behind him on the hard benches of the court flawlessly groomed men and women of his own world jostled against shabby strangers who had stood for hours waiting for the doors to open. Outside the building, where ranks

of motorcars stood parked under the elms, milled further scores. Pencils flashed across paper in the hands of a dozen reporters seated inside the railing. Now and again a little involuntary murmur passed through the room as some telling point was brought out.

Lewis had in his hand the revolver which had been found where Hemingway had said it would be—under the table near the body of Blaine. He was holding it by its long barrel, thrusting it into the vision of the police surgeon who had removed the bullet. What was the use of all this questioning when everyone in the court knew it was the weapon that had killed Blaine? Hemingway allowed his gaze to stray again, searching for the one face that was absent. Amedée Blaine was not in that hushed room—she would not appear until the time came for her to be called to the stand. The earlier harrowing she was being spared.

PRESENTLY Cathcart was on his feet. This was not the nervous lawyer of the cell consultations, the anxious friend frankly desperate of the case he had in hand. With confidence in every gesture he was attacking, battering at the statements of the witnesses. At the moment, however, he had taken a calm and suave tone. On the stand, handed over for cross-examination by the defense, sat a loutish, red-cheeked boy of fifteen with uneasy eyes who had just testified to his presence at the gate of the Blaine place as the village clock struck nine. A moment later he had heard a shot.

Had the boy seen anyone else near the gate about that time? Yes, a man had passed him some minutes before. He had had a good look at him. A wild-appearing, gray-haired man. The mysterious stranger began to take form and grow into a real person stealing across a darkened lawn toward the house. Slowly but surely under Cathcart's skillful questioning the courtroom was beginning to see that figure closing in—the tense, significant poise of it.

And then, under the staring eyes of the room nervousness began to manifest itself. The boy scratched with one foot along the floor; he began to gulp out his statements, to retract them, and with every question floundered more and more. A double row of citizens in a jury-box regarded the witness stolidly. Cathcart's voice became strained as he fought to in-

still confidence into a patently bad case of the rattles.

He had seen the man come out of the grounds again? He—he couldn't say that, sir, he had taken fright and run. It was dark—he had run as fast as he could. "You'd have done the same if you'd been me, sir." The first relief in the steadily growing tension had come. The courtroom rocked with the roar of laughter, some of it half-hysterical. Only Cathcart, with his witness dismissed, twisted his hands together under the table until the veins stood out.

Hemingway, seated beside him, leaned over and put a palm on his knee. He did not have to be told what was happening to the defense—he read it in a hundred curious faces. Tomorrow a frail woman in black would sit there on the stand, answers falling from her lips to the questions of the prosecution. Those answers would drive the last nail home in the structure that was building.

He sat thereafter in a listless study, manifesting hardly a flicker of interest in the proceedings that unraveled before him. Cathcart stormed; Lewis hurled caustic sentences; a witness here, a witness there, was thrust into the limelight of publicity and stepped down. There was only one person whose testimony would count in this case—when she had come and gone everything would be over as far as he was concerned. There came the sound of voices breaking into a buzz of talk, movement and a general stir. The second day of the trial had come to an end.

SHE took the stand just before noon as the last witness for the prosecution. Mercilessly the clear sunshine flooding through the windows brought out the lines that weeks of pain had etched in her face as her hand put up her somber veil. The courtroom craned forward to fasten its stare on the woman whose husband had been shot. She looked, not toward the prosecutor who faced her or the clerk of the court about to administer the oath; hopelessly and wearily her eyes sought those of Hemingway. His face remained expressionless but she seemed satisfied as though by the mere sight of him. The first of the prosecution's questions came crisply, almost staggeringly at her.

Cathcart was leaning forward searching Amedée's face as though he wanted to read to the depths of her soul. The time had

come for the defense to clutch at straws—he had told Hemingway so last night while he paced the cell, storming.

"Our only possible witness has gone down," he said bluntly. "I do not think that you want anything less than the real facts. We are beaten, battered into pieces, although we sha'n't give up hope. I know that boy was telling the truth but that will get us nothing. Better witnesses than he have gone to pieces when they arrived on the stand. That one laugh at his expense in the courtroom has cost us more than I'd like to say. You know the psychology of it. I have moved heaven and earth and still the man he spoke of isn't to be found. And you—you—Garret, I cannot make you out."

"You're doing all you can," said Hemingway calmly. "I know as well as you do that we have no case—we never had a shadow of one. The man of mystery is a fiction." A trace of utter fatigue crept into his voice. "When will all this be over?"

"By tomorrow night, I'm afraid. About the time my office has finished paying off your creditors, the verdict may be in. It doesn't even seem that we are to have the moral advantage of your sacrifice in that. Boyd Blaine must be grinning in his grave by now."

Cathcart had spread out his hands and left with those words.

NOW in Cathcart's dull eyes and grim mouth lay the story of a night spent in desperate toil to retrieve a lost issue. He had not turned to speak to Hemingway in half an hour; every faculty was on the case in hand. Hemingway could see growing in him an iron determination that would smash anything and anybody into utter ruin if by so doing he could win through for his client.

"And now in your own words, Mrs. Blaine, tell us what your movements were that evening after dinner. You say that your husband followed you upstairs after you left Mr. Hemingway?"

"Yes," she faltered. For an instant her hands clutched at the arms of her seat. "He came to my room. He had overheard Mr. Hemingway and myself talking about—about him—in the hall. He was wild with rage and his drink. He—he struck me."

The hesitant voice died into silence. Here and there about the crowded benches

rose little astonished intakes of breath. But the questions of Lewis, not pausing for a moment's respite of sympathy, went remorselessly on.

"Where was Mr. Hemingway at this time? Did he come up?"

"Yes. I cried out just before I fell. He came up."

"I see." Lewis drew his lips into a thin line. "And when he and your husband were face to face what happened?"

"They stood looking at each other. Mr. Hemingway grew very white. My—my husband cursed him."

"And what did Mr. Hemingway say in return to your husband?"

Amedée looked down and directly at Hemingway. A terrible appeal went out to him from her eyes. He sat stiffly in his seat, not noticing for the moment that he was alone. He had not seen the court attendant who had whispered into Cathcart's ear a message that had torn him from his seat, regardless of the witness under examination, and sent him shoving through the crowd and out of the courtroom. It seemed that the courtroom itself had vanished; the crisp utterances of the man who was demanding his life had dwindled away—there was nothing in the world but this one slim figure whose eyes were sending to him their pitiful question.

A nod from him, a brief gesture and the whole current of her testimony would change. She would be a woman fighting for the man she loved; she would lie clearly and collectedly in reply to every interrogation; she would build up for him an alibi that would withstand all attack. In the poise of her he knew that she had it ready. He might that evening walk out of this dingy room a free, cleared man.

He had foreseen all this in advance. He had given her her instructions. Soundlessly his lips framed words that could not be mistaken.

"Tell him."

She gave a little shudder and closed her eyes, her head leaning against the back of her seat. Her voice came low but the whole room caught it.

"He said: 'I could kill you for this, you hound!'"

A BREATH, sharply expelled, escaped Hemingway. About him he heard the soft, broken ejaculations of a crowd swept from its balance by the impact of an unexpected sensation. At the reporters' table,

the pencils were racing at triple speed, getting onto paper words which would ride the wires and in half an hour would be shrieked in city streets in headlines a front page wide. "Wuxtree! Wuxtree! Death threat by Hemingway before the murder!" People would stop to buy that.

"And after that you became unconscious from the shock and remembered nothing until you found Mr. Hemingway in the custody of the police?"

Lewis spoke for the instant almost conversationally. He had made his point—premeditation, the cornerstone of every prosecution in a capital case. The one low sentence of the woman on the stand had been heard by all and he had given it time to sink in. Amedée was leaning back again in her seat, every trace of color gone from her face. It was as though her soul had gone out from her with those words she had spoken. Her lips worked a little. She passed her hand helplessly over her forehead and did not even glance toward a turmoil just becoming noticeable at the door.

Cathcart was returning through the crowd, pressing some one ahead of him. Behind the pair Hemingway recognized young Allston of Cathcart's office in a dusty motor coat. Cathcart left the group and plunged past the railing, hurling himself into his chair next to Hemingway. The dullness was out of his eyes; they glowed with a feverish light. He whispered in sharp, nearly incoherent sentences.

"I've got him—I've got him! He came to the office an hour ago to get his money back from your crash. Once he had it actually in his hand he told Allston the whole story. Didn't care up to now if you rotted in hell or not. Thought you were a crook too. Allston didn't even stop to phone—grabbed a motor, and here they both are. Man, you'll be free in half an hour!"

"What are you saying?" With lightning-like quickness Hemingway's glance swept from Amedée to the excited Cathcart.

"The gray man—the mysterious man. Look at him there with Allston! Chemist—Scotch—one of your investors. I guessed it right. He saw the shooting of Boyd Blaine through the window. He came down to beg for his money—all he had. I tell you he saw the whole shooting!"

There should have been incredulity, amazement and a leaping joy in Hemingway's face. Instead his grip on Cathcart's arm tightened until it became like a vise.

"What do you intend to do with this man?"

"Put him on the stand, by God! I'll show this courtroom who did and who didn't shoot Boyd Blaine!"

"You never will." Hemingway's eyes blazed. "I am discharging you from the case. From now on I am conducting the defense myself. I can do so if I like. Cathcart—you are through!"

The lawyer turned on him a face that twitched frenziedly.

"You fool!" he grated. "You've committed suicide! Can't I make you listen? That isn't all the man said. It's a miracle. I'm trying to tell you he saw—"

Over his head Hemingway glimpsed the gaunt personality of the new witness just at the rail. It was a lean face, dour and fanatic. Tinge it with anger and fear and it would indeed be the face of a wolf—at a window. As it looked now it would be proof against the assault of half a hundred machinelike prosecutors.

"Take that witness and get him out of here," said Hemingway in a low, almost breaking voice. "For God's sake, Cathcart, get him out of here! There is not a moment to lose."

Coldness itself, the accents of Lewis cut into the courtroom's tensivity. A chilly triumph glinted behind his glasses as he pressed on.

"A glass of water for Mrs. Blaine, please. And now, madam, you were about to tell the court—"

AMEDEE BLAINE had risen from her seat. As though fascinated, her eyes were resting on the figure of Cathcart's new witness. Waves of an indescribable emotion were passing over her face; something, some tremendous change was taking place within her, reflected by the agony that lay there for anyone who could to interpret. To Hemingway flashed first the knowledge of what was about to happen. For the fraction of a second her eyes veered to his and he put all the purpose of a living will into his glance. He must beat down, crush, prevent this thing before it came to fullness. Beside him Cathcart was still fighting to be heard, tugging at his sleeve.

Hemingway was on his feet, his gaze riveted upon Amedée's struggling consciousness.

"Your Honor," he said in a voice that carried to the farthest corner, "I wish to

make a statement to the court. I killed Boyd Blaine. I offer no defense."

There was a rustle of papers amid an appalling silence. The prosecutor had wheeled with calculated calm toward the jury and was thrusting his documents away. He knew how to seize and exploit to the full the sudden drama that had staggered the room.

"The prosecution rests its case," he said incisively. "That will be all, Mrs. Blaine."

The cry that burst from her rang through a court tomblike in its hush.

"No! No—*no!* You asked me a question. I have not answered it! I shall now—to the very end. You want to know who killed Boyd Blaine?"

"*Amedée!*" The word ripped out of Hemingway. She faced him squarely and a smile for the first time irradiated her face. The shadow was gone from the depths of her eyes. His struggle had been in vain—Amedée Blaine had probed to the back of an hour of darkness. His last desperate effort had only served to tear away the remaining shreds of the veil, had brought on debacle.

"You want to know what happened after my husband struck me, after I went down unconscious? I know now—it has come back to me! I got to my knees by the bed. They had left the room. I heard their voices downstairs. My husband was threatening—he might kill Mr. Hemingway. I think that that night he was mad. So I went down to the library like a person in a dream—my head was all dazed. From the stairs I saw Mr. Hemingway come out of the library, walking fast with his hands clenched, and go along the hall to the den. I went in to my husband."

"Man," rattled Cathcart in Hemingway's ear, "now are you going to let me tell you—"

Hemingway thrust him off. Amedée's voice was proceeding, every sentence of it a knife-thrust to him. "He was clawing at the drawer of the desk, and his hand came out with a revolver—that revolver there. He turned on me. 'I'm going to get that damned Hemingway!' he said. He called me a terrible name. 'And when I've shot him down, I'm coming back here for you,' he flung at me. And so—and so— It wasn't Mr. Hemingway who killed him. It was—" Her rapid utterance broke; she put her hands over her face, her whole frail body quivering with the horror of it.

"Say it," rasped Lewis. One hard, steely glance in his direction was caught by Hemingway before the prosecutor turned. Skillfully, superbly he had built up a flawless case against him; now it had toppled into dust. Some one must pay for it. It was going to be this woman on the stand.

Amedée raised a face, harrowed but now strangely composed. "Yes," she said quietly, "I shot him. And after that I fainted, and came to myself upstairs on my own bed with everything a blank. Mr. Hemingway must have carried me there. He must have seen that the shock had made me forget. So he took it on himself. I don't remember anything more except a face—the face of that man." Her outstretched arm pointed to a figure now seated beside Cathcart at Hemingway's table. "That was what brought it back to me. It was at the window after I had shot."

ALL trace of the emotion that had racked her had been fought down save for a small quivering of the hands on the chair arm. Amedée Blaine had won back to her thoroughbred self, delicate fiber all through, but now instinct with a strength that Hemingway had never seen before. He sat with a face like chalk. A glance at it, and anyone—prosecutor, judge, juryman—could read the truth. He was seeing another scene: the brightly lighted library again, himself racing into it from the hall at the crash of a pistol, Boyd Blaine twisted in death on the floor, and standing above him Amedée, with the vague, helpless look of a woman whose mind at the moment has gone far astray. She did not know that she had shot him—there was no need that she should ever know.

He hid his face, insensible to the clutch of a wildly jubilant Cathcart. Hurried words were being whispered into his ear. Cathcart had reached to him at last, but it was minutes before, for the first time, he caught the full impact of his meaning. His only thought was for the erect, black-clad loveliness on the stand that nothing any longer could protect.

The prosecutor was speaking. Through change and conflict, the law was functioning. "I ask Your Honor to nolle-pross the case against the present defendant. The State will lodge a formal charge of murder against this woman based on her own testimony."

"I object, Your Honor!" Cathcart's

voice rose suddenly. Hemingway's face was now a study in stunned emotion, but it was his swift word that had sent the lawyer to his feet. "I insist that the proceedings go on. I am putting a witness on the stand who will perform an incalculable service."

Amedée rose from her seat and made her way listlessly to a bench within the railing. At a nod from Lewis a burly individual stepped inside the barrier and sat down beside her. Something clutched at Hemingway's heart so that it almost seemed to stop beating. She looked so fragile and childlike in the shadow of the law. She would not meet the glance, blazing with meaning, that he sent to her—she sat limply with folded hands, her crisis over. Only once had she looked at him, and that was when she had stepped down from the stand. That one look had pierced him to the core.

Cathcart had his witness at last. Name—John Sanderson. Age—forty-two. Every cent that he and his family had in the world invested with Blaine and Hemingway. Then the crash. Yes, he had come down from town to try by a desperate plea to get his savings back from Blaine. He remembered meeting a boy at the gate.

"The window was lighted, so I looked in there first, sir. It was such a big place they might have turned me away from the door, being a poor man."

"And what did you see?" said Cathcart. Hemingway gripped his hands together. A tremendous light flooded his face. In the courtroom not a vestige of sound could be heard. Hemingway himself was to hear from the lips of a stranger what the tragedy had been that he had not seen. He was to hear a narration that would be a verbal bombshell.

"The big man, Mr. Blaine, was raging terribly at the gentleman there. The gentleman gave it to him up and down, called him a brute and a drunkard, and then walked out as though he was afraid he couldn't hold himself in much longer. The little lady yonder came in, and Blaine ripped out his revolver. He said what the lady has told."

"And then?"

"She said: 'Kill me if you want to—but leave him alone.' She talked sort of queerly. The big man looked crazy with drink. He yelled, 'Yes, I'm going to do just that!' and took his gun by the barrel

like a club. The lady was standing across the table from him. He was reeling when he hit at her, and he never reached her at all. The gun in his hand came down smash on the table with the hammer cocked and the barrel pointed at him, and it went off. He looked all startled and shocked, and fell down. The lady fainted a minute later, when the other gentleman came running back."

A HAZE swam before Hemingway. Through it he saw Amedée once more on the stand, heard her low voice.

"Why did you testify that you shot your husband, Mrs. Blaine?"

"Who would ever believe the truth, that the gun went off when he struck at me with it and hit the table? I can hardly believe it myself—it happened so quickly. I didn't know that that man saw it all. And after what Blaine had been to me anybody would believe that—that I'd shot him."

"In other words you simply reversed his own action on Mr. Hemingway?"

Her answer was only caught by those close at hand. "He risked everything for me," she said simply. "What else could I do for him?"

Cathcart turned with briskness. "I hand the witnesses over to the prosecution for cross-examination, if desired. The defense admits that both of them are culpable of error—Mr. Sanderson for allowing a feeling of enmity to close his mouth until this date, and Mrs. Blaine for obstructing the due course of law by a misstatement."

Hemingway saw an opponent—cold, ruthless and fired by ambition—break into the urbane smile of the man who knows how to lose in public. Lewis removed his glasses and polished them with his handkerchief. He had not been appointed to the office of prosecutor without a knowledge of what the real truth was like when he came in contact with it.

"I ask that the entire case be thrown out of court," he said. It was then that the noise started in which all sound of the judge's gavel was lost. Outside, the sirens of the motors under the elms commenced a glorious hooting. All sound of everything became lost. No one heard what Hemingway, bending over Amedée with both her hands in his, said to her or she to him. Her face, however, was incredibly radiant.



Eligibility

The football coach has his triumphs as well as troubles—as witness this splendid story by a writer who not only knows his subject at first hand but who also strikingly demonstrates his eligibility as a writer.

By W. F. G. THACHER

TROUBLE? I'll say a coach has trouble. Maybe it's different with these top-notchers like Yost and Stagg and Bill Roper, with only one sport to look after, a bunch of trainers, one of these boards of strategy, and an assistant coach for each position on the team. But I guess they have their troubles too, just the same as us fellows out in the sticks, coaching in the little colleges.

It didn't used to be so bad before the colleges went crazy over this eligibility stuff. Then all a coach had to do was to go out and get his team. It was a fair field and no favor. Anything went and no questions asked. If he turned in a winner, all right. If not, he'd probably have to look for another job.

Then one of these reform waves hit the country. I was coaching at Pelion at the time. I had been there three years, and liked it fine. It wasn't very much of a college, maybe, so far as learning went. But they were strong for sports, especially football, and they backed their teams to the limit.

There were fourteen or fifteen hundred

students at Pelion, and nearly half of them were girls. But out of that bunch of fellows there was more big-league athletic material than I have seen in many colleges twice its size.

Football was the big noise. And the whole football season was boiled down into one thing—*beat Ossia*. You could lose every other game on the schedule, and if you beat Ossia your season was a success. Ossia was over twice the size of Pelion, with much finer buildings, a bigger campus, and other advantages. And they beat us most of the time in baseball, basketball and minor sports. But in football we licked them just as regularly as the leaves turned color in the fall. It never seemed to make any difference what kind of a team they had or Pelion had—Pelion simply went out there on that old field and bucked and kicked and tackled and fought for a victory. They called it Pelion luck. Shucks! It was Pelion fight.

Of course no school can win *all* the time. It isn't in the breaks. Pelion lost the year before I went there. In fact, that's the reason I *did* go there. There was no mercy

for a losing coach at Pelion—not if his team lost to Ossia. That was his job—to beat Ossia. That was *my* job.

I *did* it, too. I was mighty lucky to get by the first year. No coach ought to be expected to win his first year. It takes him two, at least, to get his system working. I had a green team, with six Freshmen on our first-string line-up. Oh yes, we played Freshmen in those days. And Ossia came over with a veteran team—practically the same gang that beat Pelion the year before. The betting ran two to one against us. But I had an ace in the hole.

OUT of the mess of recruits that I had looked over, I found one of those rare birds that a coach dreams of and prays for. This kid was a long, loose-knitted, big-boned boy named Victor Maddox. He drifted in from the hills and turned out with the other Freshmen. I didn't get my eye on him for a week. Then one night I was watching the boys punting back and forth before regular practice—and I found him. Every time he'd get hold of the ball, he would turn and trot back about twenty yards behind the other fellows, drop the ball, meet it with a powerful upswing of his foot—and boot a high, long spiral that usually sailed over the heads of the fellows catching on the other side.

Of course I tried him out that night, and found him to be even better than he had looked. I found out, too, how he had learned the art of punting. Victor got his first football from a mail-order house when he was a kid. One summer it happened that his dad hired a man who had once played football at some Eastern college. This fellow took an interest in Vic and showed the boy what he knew about kicking. And, believe me, the boy had profited by his instructions.

Of course, I knew I had a find. But I knew, too, that I had a problem to make use of this discovery. Vic had never played a game of football; he had never even seen a game of football. All that he knew about the game he had learned by reading. He couldn't run with the ball, he couldn't interfere, he couldn't block or tackle or pass. And I simply didn't have time to teach him any of these things, which are the groundwork of every football player's education, and which most boys pick up in high school. But I did the best I could and told him to learn as much as he could from the other fellows. He was

a cheerful kid—had brains, too. All the other fellows liked him, first off.

"All right, Coach," he'd say. "Only let me boot that old ball awhile. That's all I ask."

HE kept learning. After regular practice, I'd sometimes see him on the field alone, falling on the ball or practicing starting. And he was always asking questions about this or that. But no man can learn football in a month, and, good as he was as a punter, I simply couldn't put him on the team. He would have wrecked any team play that I could have developed.

I had a fair sort of line that year, with a veteran center, one good tackle, and a pair of fast ends. But my backfield was bad. There wasn't a man that I could rely upon for consistent yardage. That season was a nightmare. We lost all the preliminary games that counted, and I was desperate. There was just one ray of hope. Along toward the end of the games, when there wasn't a chance of winning, I'd put Vic in the backfield—just to give him confidence and a little experience under fire. He got away with it fine. Even with two or three big forwards charging through to block his punt, he never cringed or lost his nerve, but just swung that right foot—and away the ball would go—fifty or sixty yards, and high enough so that the ends had lots of time to get down for the tackle.

Nobody thought we had a chance against Ossia. I didn't myself. But I knew it would be a football game. I had absorbed enough of the fighting spirit of Pelion to be sure that the team would play about one hundred per cent better than they knew how against their traditional enemy. And they did. They couldn't gain at all. They didn't make a first down the whole game. But they fought like tigers when Ossia had the ball, and the best that Ossia could do in the first half was one touchdown as a result of a long forward pass. They didn't kick goal.

Between halves I told the team that early in the second half I was going to put Vic in. After about five minutes of play, Pelion recovered an Ossian fumble on Pelion's forty-yard line. Then I sent in Vic. Pelion rushed a couple of times, to mask the play, and then Vic lifted a spiral that sailed a good sixty yards—away over the head of the Ossian safety—and the ball kept right on rolling so that the safety fell on it on his own four-yard line. On the first play

Ossia called for a punt, the pass was fumbled, and when the mass of men was untangled, the ball was in the clutches of one of our ends. We kicked goal—and that's all there was of it. Ossia tried desperately. They would gain thirty or forty yards, and then our tigerish defense would hold them up. We would get the ball, and Vic would punt it out of immediate danger.

I said it was luck. It was partly that. But if it hadn't been for Vic, no luck could have saved us.

Of course Vic was a hero; and everyone forgot all about the early season disasters, and I was ace-high on the campus.

A WEEK after the Ossian game, Vic came to me in my office and said to me: "Coach, I want to learn football. I'm not satisfied with being just a kicker. I figure on going to school here for four years, and I want you to teach me all there is to know."

"That's what I'm here for, son," I answered.

"But I want to begin right now. I've got to make up for lost time. Will you take me on?"

Would I? Would a duck swim? And right there started one of those friendships that make all the troubles of a coach look like nothing at all. In a week Vic got a room next to mine, and outside of classes he and I were together much of the time. I gave him all the football I knew. We would rope in two or three other fellows when the weather was decent, get out on the field, and work our heads off. So far I had worked him only in a backfield position. But I soon saw that he wasn't cut out for that sort of a job. So I tried him out as a tackle, and pretty soon I began to see his possibilities. He was only a half-grown kid, remember, weighing perhaps 160 pounds. But he had strength, and he had brains. He always had to know the *why* of everything.

Night after night, on the field, in the gymnasium, in our room, alone or with some other fellows, we worked on that highly skilled technic which we call position play—all that specialized science that the crowd in the stands rarely sees, but which to my way of thinking is the secret of successful football.

When Vic showed up the next fall, I hardly knew the boy. He had spent the summer on the ranch, had put on twenty pounds of clean, hard flesh, and looked fit

to gallop. In the first scrimmage we had, I put him in at left tackle, and after a few rushes, I knew that I didn't have to worry any more about that position—not while Vic was in college. I picked up a couple of good backs among the Freshmen, and, with all the old men back, my system working, perfect harmony on the team, and Pelion spirit to keep us at fighting edge, we had a great season. We lost to the big State university, of course, but after that we won every game, and wound up by cleaning Ossia fourteen to nothing.

Vic's punting was always a decisive factor. Of course we didn't have to use him so much. But if anybody tells you that it doesn't mean a lot to a team to have a kicker that can be relied upon to outkick the best of his opponents by a good ten yards, that man doesn't know football. It isn't alone the gain in yardage on an exchange of punts: it's the confidence that it gives the team. They can afford to take a few chances, because they know that if things go wrong, as they are bound to, sometimes, they can make up their loss whenever they have to kick.

And before the season was over, Vic was one of the leading tackles in the Conference. Oh yes, we had a conference that year. Before that it was each school for itself. But a bunch of high-brows got together and decided that we had to have a conference to iron out schedule complications, establish eligibility rules, and generally boss athletics. I didn't worry about it so much at first. I didn't want to play Freshmen anyway; and if all the colleges were bound by the same regulations, I couldn't see that it made any difference.

JUST about then we had a change of administration at Pelion. When I went there the president was old Doc Widemer—a queer old bird with chin whiskers, who taught astronomy, didn't know football from the Big Dipper, and didn't care very much what went on so long as it didn't interfere with his star gazing. But the trustees must have decided that he was too easy-going, so they let him out. The new prexy's name was Wooster. He was a little runt, who stood very straight, like so many little men, and with the sharpest pair of eyes I ever saw. One of the first things he did was to send for me to come to his office.

"Coach," he said, after shaking hands in a friendly sort of way, "you and I have

got to come to an understanding. My job here is a good deal like yours. You're hired to run athletics, and I'm hired to run the college. If you don't make good, you're fired. Same way with me. I'm not going to interfere with you at all, provided your men measure up to the scholastic requirements of the institution. These boys are sent here to get an education. They may not realize it, but that's what they're here for. Or if they're not, some of them, they have no business here. That's what a college is for, you know—education. But I believe in athletics as a necessary part of education. And I believe in games in a way that I could probably not make you understand at all. I was an undergraduate in a great university with an athletic record that was a thing to be proud of when the site of Pelion was still covered with buffalo grass. And I'm telling you God's truth, Coach, when I say that I'd trade my Phi Beta Kappa pin for the privilege of wearing a sweater with a big block *P* on it. Of course, I never had a chance.

"But that's neither here nor there. Our scholastic requirements are not unreasonable, but they're going to be strictly enforced. I'm telling you this, because I know that things have been a little lax here, and I want to give you time to adjust yourself to the situation."

PREXY did most of the talking. But when I left, I realized that he knew his job, and was going to get away with it—just as I was. And I knew he was a man, too, in spite of his being so little and in-offensive looking.

It wasn't so hard that year. I had a veteran team, and it happened that they were all fair students. I never had to worry about Vic. His brains weren't all football brains, by any means. We had many a long talk about the new deal, and Vic would probably have converted me, even if Prexy hadn't.

"Coach," he used to say, "you know how I love football. But you know as well as I do that it never gets you anywhere after you leave college. Oh, you're a hero all right, for a few years, and when you come back to reunions and so on. And some rich alumnus would probably give you a soft job. But life looks like a pretty big thing to me, and I want to learn all I can about it before I get into the scrimmage. These profs may be nutty—some of them; but nearly every one has some specialty

that he knows more about than any one else; and you can get a lot out of them if you go at it right."

THIS was a new one from Vic. But the boy was always surprising to me. There was another reason for Vic's new-found seriousness. Until that year he had always been skirt-shy. But I used to see him around a good deal with a Freshman girl named Crary. She seemed to be a nice little thing with big steady brown eyes, and a way of looking up at Vic that would make most any man's heart turn over.

That was Pelion's banner year. We opened up by beating the State university nine to two—the first time in Pelion's history that she had ever turned the trick. After that, nothing could stop us, and when we came to Ossia, we trimmed them forty-two to nothing. It was so easy that there wasn't much fun in it. At the end of the season, Vic was named on the all-star team of the Conference, and was mentioned by Walter Camp as one of the outstanding tackles of the country. He weighed a hundred and ninety that year, and his position play was just about perfect. He wasn't especially fast. But he was always where he was needed, blocking, tackling, opening up holes and getting down under punts. His punting was as good as ever, and he kept begging me to let him develop drop-kicking. I refused, however, giving him the reason that I didn't want to spoil a great punter by making a poor drop-kicker out of him. Vic used to laugh at that; but we didn't need a drop-kicker that year, and the matter was passed over.

I hadn't told Vic the real reason, of course. I never told anybody. The year before I came to Pelion I coached one of the greatest teams this country ever saw. It was out on the Pacific Coast, and we won the Coast championship, and played the outstanding team of the East for the championship of the United States. I had never coached east of the Mississippi, and I had a fool notion that those big Eastern teams might be a lot better than we were. That particular team had a reputation for its impregnable defense, and I was afraid we couldn't score. So I built our game around our star drop-kicker, Bill Pierce. Our game was to try a drop-kick every time we got within the thirty-yard line.

We scored twice that way during the first half, and missed two other tries by inches. It looked safe enough, because they couldn't

gain against our line at all. But in the second half, things went hay-wire, as they say out on the Coast. Our team got a little too confident, with victory apparently so sure, and on a fumble the Easterners recovered, and in three forward passes, carried the ball half the length of the field, scored a touchdown, and kicked goal. The final score was seven to six. We had outrushed them, two to one, outkicked them, and outplayed them in every way. If Pierce had broken his toe before that game, so he couldn't kick, and we had stuck to straight football, we would have scored at least two touchdowns.

AFTER the game I went out behind the grandstand, and after kicking myself around for a while, I made a little agreement with myself that that was the last time I'd ever make that mistake. And that was why I had never let Vic learn to drop-kick.

When we got back next year, Vic could hardly wait to get me out on the field. "Got something to show you, Coach," he said, "hurry up."

Standing on the thirty-yard line, he kicked three drops in succession. Then he went back five yards and repeated the performance. Five yards more, and still not a miss. It wasn't until he reached the fifty-yard line that he failed to put the ball over.

"Huh," I grunted. "Now that you've made a fancy drop-kicker out of yourself, let's see you punt."

"Coach," Vic laughed, "you're a pessimist. Watch this one."

The sixty-yard spiral left me with no grounds for complaint.

"You see, Coach," Vic explained, "we're up against a hard problem this year. With over half of the old gang gone, I figured that we had to have something to fall back on. So I put in a part of the summer practicing drop-kicking out back of dad's barn. It may come in handy."

I really had to admit that Vic was right. But I made him promise to keep it dark, as I was afraid of the effect there might be on the team. I hadn't forgotten my lesson, but I realized that the situation might be different.

Things did look pretty gloomy, and the gloom kept getting thicker and thicker. Out of our little nucleus of veterans, two were found ineligible on account of poor scholarship the last term; another had played four years; and a fourth was out for

the season with a twisted knee. And there wasn't anything much coming up from the last year's Freshmen. Worst of all, Pelion's old fighting spirit seemed lacking.

Vic was captain, of course, and he and I had a little session together, and decided that something desperate had to be done. So we called a mass meeting of the student body, and put it up to them.

THAT meeting was a dinger. Prexy talked, and old Stiffy Doreen, who taught mathematics or something, but was a rabid football fan, and I made a little speech. But Vic carried the big guns. When he got up on the platform they cheered him for five minutes. The boy could speak, too. None of your flowery stuff, but straight man-to-man talk. He told them about the predicament we were in, told them that nothing but Pelion spirit could pull us through.

"Listen," he said. "They've got a good team over at Ossia. I don't know how they got it, but they have. They're saying over there that they're going to beat us by four touchdowns. Are they going to do it? *Are you going to let them do it?*"

The NO that thundered back fairly lifted the roof off old Spurgeon Hall.

"Sure you're not, but just saying so isn't going to beat Ossia. We've got to do something. And here's what we're going to do. You know the shape we're in—the hard luck we've had. Now we're not complaining or quitting. That isn't Pelion spirit. The Coach and I believe that there are enough good men right here in this room to beat the best team that Ossia ever turned out. Tonight at four o'clock we want every Pelion man that ever played football, or ever wanted to play football, out there on the field. Give Coach the men—he'll make a team. Will you do it?"

"Ye-a-a-a," came the answer in a great billow of sound.

Then Johnny Wilson, yell-leader, took charge. The old Pelion "railroad" yell set the rafters to vibrating, and the crowd marched out singing Pelion's battle-hymn, "Pelion, Fair Pelion."

When I went out to the field that afternoon, there were not fifty men, nor a hundred men, but practically every man in Pelion out there, in football clothes, overalls, and every sort of nondescript costume.

I didn't get it at first; but Johnny Wilson stepped forward and said: "Coach, we took Vic at his word—that's all. We know

you can't use us all. But you can have any Pelion man you want—any damned one of us. That's the way we feel about it."

I couldn't answer for a minute. Then I told them how I appreciated it, and that with such spirit as that, Pelion simply couldn't lose. So we had a few yells and then I sent them all home.

Then Vic and I got busy. We knew there wasn't time to handle a lot of men, so we picked out about thirty of the most promising, put the most likely on what we called the first team, and went to work.

And work? Say, I never saw anything like it. Three hours every night, until it got so dark you couldn't see the ball. And skull practice in the evening.

OUR first job, of course, was to get a defense. My only real hope of scoring at all lay in Vic's educated foot. And any numbskull could see that to give him a chance to kick and to protect him while he was kicking, we had to have a line. I didn't have much time to teach them the fine points of position playing, but I did what I could; and every night I'd put my huskiest set of backs on the second team, with instructions to buck, buck, buck. I didn't bother much about injuries. Every scrimmage was a battle from start to finish.

With Vic on the left side of the line, I felt that that side was taken care of. He could stop anything that came anywhere near him. The best I could do for center was a little hundred-and-fifty pounder whom I put in because he could pass; and I had to have a reliable passer on Vic's account. I dug up a big bear of a Sophomore named Charley Morse for the right tackle's job. He had lots of latent ability, but was totally without experience. My right end was one of my few veterans and a star; but the other end and both guards were just kids—strong and willing, but green and inexperienced.

My quarter was a little shrimp named Edwards, who had played on the second team for three years. He had a good head, and was a reliable safety. The other backs were big youngsters, whom I selected more to form a strong secondary defense than because of their ability to run with the ball. One, Holy Jensen, was a comer. He was called Holy because he was president of the "Y."

I taught them a few simple formations—just enough to fool the other fellows, if possible. You see, my whole plan was to

derive the greatest possible advantage from Vic's kicking.

In the first place, State beat us thirty-four to nothing. And we lost the next three games, too. But the scores were low, and the team was learning all the time. It was understood on the campus that we were simply using these games for practice purposes, with the one idea of developing a team that would beat Ossia. Of course there was crabbing from some of the alumni, and the papers called us the "joke" team. We didn't care. The less Ossia thought of us, the greater our chances of beating her.

We had two weeks of uninterrupted practice before the game with Ossia, and every one was secret. I let the defense rest for a while, and worked on the offense. Jensen was developing rapidly, and on a play through Vic's tackle was good for yardage. I worked up a few forward passes, too, with Vic and my right end on the receiving end. But I was afraid of those plays. Too many chances, with a green team.

In all the early games, Vic had not dropped-kicked once. As a matter of fact, we didn't get near enough to our opponent's goal more than two or three times. But in secret practice he looked better than ever. If only we could get near enough!

The morning of the big game I was alone in my office for a moment when the telephone rang. Stiffy Doreen was on the line, and he was yammering so, at first, I couldn't get a word. "Vic," he kept saying. "Vic—Vic—cheat—caught cheating. Can't play. Vic cheating."

"What?" I bawled back at him. "Say that again you crazy fool and I'll—" I was so mad I choked.

"It's true, Coach. He don't deny it. He can't play."

IT was some time before I got the facts. It seems that on Thursday an instructor in political science had given a written quiz. When he read the papers, he found that those of Victor and another student were almost identical. He laid the matter before the disciplinary committee, and that morning both boys were called before the committee. The other student denied his guilt, but Victor simply refused to say anything. As a result, the committee deferred a final decision, but voted to suspend both men from participation in all student activities until the matter was cleared up.

I had hardly hung up the receiver when

I was called to the President's office. Vic was there. The boy gave me one look when I came in, and it wrung my heart. All the boyishness had gone out of his face, but there was a flicker of his old smile as he greeted me, "Hello, Coach. The breaks are against us, I guess."

Prexy spoke first. "You understand, Coach, that I'm backing my committee in this thing. Under the circumstances they did the only thing that was possible. But I'm satisfied that all the facts in the case have not been brought out. And this obstinate young man here, for some unaccountable reason, refuses to say a word. I know your relations, you two. Wont you try, Coach?"

"Vic," I began. But he interrupted me. "It's no use, Coach. I'm not saying a word. Of course I'd like to have you believe in me. But so far as I'm concerned, the score stands as it is."

I knew better than to try. I'd seen that look on Vic's face before—but under different circumstances. So Victor was dismissed with a promise that he would stay in his room till he heard from us.

"PRESIDENT WOOSTER," I said, as soon as the door had closed, "you know as well as I that Victor did not do this thing. But there's something keeping his tongue tied, and we've got to find out what it is, and damned soon."

"I'm with you, Coach. What do you suggest?"

"First I want to know who the student is whose paper was like Vic's."

"His name is Bottinger. He is a Sophomore who transferred to Pelion this year from some Eastern university. That really is all I know—except what I saw of him this morning. I'll say frankly that his appearance and behavior did not impress me favorably. But I could not allow myself to be influenced by my impressions."

"Bottinger." The name was unusual, and yet sounded vaguely familiar. I had heard it somewhere, recently. And then it came to me, and I cursed myself for a numbskull that I hadn't thought of it before. When Vic came back for his Junior year, he told me that he had taken on a roommate—a fellow whom he thought he might help, he said. And from another chap—a friend of Vic's, I had learned that this man was a half-brother of Alice Cray's, and a ne'er-do-well, who had caused her mother a great deal of trouble.

WITH those facts in mind, the whole thing was clear enough. Bottinger had done the copying, of course, and Vic had refused to tell because of his relations with the half-sister of the real culprit. At least, that was the way I had it figured out—and I felt pretty sure of my grounds. I told the President my suspicions, and he agreed that my reasoning was sound, and gave me full authority to act.

I knew that Alice Cray had not returned to college that fall, and that her home was in a little town named Two Rivers, about forty miles from Pelion. I called Two Rivers without delay, and their central reported that Miss Cray had left for Pelion that morning to attend the big game. Then, through one of her friends on the campus, I learned where she would probably be staying. I telephoned there, and, after a moment, she came to the telephone. She was surprised to learn who was speaking, and asked if I knew anything about Phil Bottinger, who, she said, was to have met her at the train. She told me that her visit was without Vic's knowledge, as she wanted to surprise him. I replied that possibly I might explain Bottinger's failure to appear, asked if I might see her at once, and hurried to her house.

I had no definite plan, but I was satisfied that whatever I did must be done through Alice. I had known her but slightly when she was in college. She wasn't much of a butterfly. But as soon as I saw her again and had a good look at her honest eyes, I decided that the only thing to do was to be perfectly frank. So I laid all my cards on the table, told her the whole story, and asked her to help me.

"It isn't only the game, Miss Alice," I finished, "it's for Pelion, and for Vic. Things like that ruin a young fellow for life, sometimes."

I could see the girl's hands clutch each other, and her forehead knit in pain. She sat silent for a moment. When she spoke, her voice was strained, but her words were clear and decisive.

"Mr. Vail," she began, "you can count on me to do anything I can to help, but I want you to understand my position. Victor is my—I've promised to become his wife some day; and he must not suffer. Philip Bottinger is my half-brother. He has been wild, and has caused us lots of unhappiness—my mother and me. You know I'm loyal to Pelion. But none of those things matter so much. It's a ques-

tion of right, of simple justice. Can you bring Phil here—or take me to him?”

I've heard some stirring speeches in my life. A coach hears a lot of oratory, and that sort of thing. But I never heard any words in all my experience that moved me quite so deeply as those of that young girl.

OF course Bottinger wasn't in his room. But, through the efforts of a half-dozen scouts that I sent out, I located him in a little downtown hotel. I took Alice there, but it was with many misgivings that I watched her climb the stairs to an interview that I knew must be full of pain for her.

In twenty minutes she returned. Her face was tear-stained, but her eyes were steady as she handed me a paper.

“That will clear Victor, Mr. Vail. Now please don't say anything, but take me home.”

I have never known what took place in that room on that November morning.

In half an hour Prexy had his committee together, and Victor was cleared. In ten minutes more I was in his room.

“Vic,” I shouted, “it's all right—you're cleared. You can play.”

For a moment he stared at me unbelievably. Then he let out one whoop of pure joy, seized me by the shoulders, and we did a little war dance that would have stopped the show, as they say, if there had been any spectators.

At two o'clock, I had the team lined up, shoulder to shoulder in the locker-room. I looked them over, man after man. Then I went up to Shrimp Edwards, standing on the end nearest me. I stood as close to him as I could and looked him squarely in the eye.

“Edwards,” I said, “you call yourself a football player. Maybe you are. Well, what have you ever done for Pelion? Anything?”

Shrimp hung his head.

Then came Morse. I gave him the same line. Out of the corner of my eye I could see the other men wriggling about uneasily. All except Vic. He stood like a statue. Slowly I went from man to man with that question, “What have you done for Pelion?” And not one had a word to say. But I could hear them breathe through clenched teeth.

Then I came to Vic. He met my eye evenly, and the little smile twitched the corners of his mouth.

Ask him—Vic—what he had done for Pelion? “Good old Vic,” I said, “everybody's pulling for you today.”

Half the team broke down and blubbered like kids, and I heard Holy Jensen saying over and over, softly, “Damn Ossia. Damn Ossia.” Shucks—that wasn't profanity. That was prayer.

From the first, that game was a heart-breaker. Ossia received the kick-off, and marched straight down the field for fifty yards before they were halted. Then a play went wrong, and on the next down Vic got through and stopped the runner for a loss. Ossia tried a place kick, which went wild, and it was Pelion's ball on her twenty-yard line. On the first down, Vic punted a fifty-five-yard spiral, and so high that the ends were waiting for the safety when he caught it. Ossia started her advance again, and on the fourth down, got away with a long forward pass, and the end that caught it wasn't downed until he reached our eight-yard line. It took them all four downs to put it over. But they scored, and kicked goal.

Ossian cheers split the air; but Johnny Wilson had his gang working, and the sound of that big “*Pe-li-on*” rolling out over the field was the stuff our boys needed. Ossia received again, and this time Pelion stopped them dead in their tracks. They punted, and Shrimp, taking the catch on the dead run, wiggled and dodged and twisted his way through the ruck of Ossian players until he reached their thirty-yard line. Then Pelion tried her offensive for the first time. Jensen made five yards through left tackle, two more through the same place, and then Vic, with all the ease in the world, dropped back and kicked a perfect goal from the field.

THE half ended without more scoring, and during the intermission, bets were offered of three-to-one that Ossia would win.

I talked to that team as I have never talked to a team before or since. No rough stuff this time—no sarcasm. I simply begged and implored them to go out there and show those fellows what Pelion men were made of. When I got through, a kid slipped a note into my hand. It was addressed to Vic, and while I was debating whether to give it to him or to wait until after the game, he saw it and reached for it. The smile that spread over his face as he read it was wonderful to see. “Keep

it for me, Coach," he said. "Come on, fellows, let's go get 'em."

That second half was war—just war. I never saw two teams fight harder. Ossia kept the ball most of the time; but they couldn't put it over; and every time Vic's long, clean punts would avert the danger. But the score was seven to three against us, and the half was slowly slipping away. What good was it to stop Ossia? We had to score. I sat there on the bench, with the sweat pouring from my face, praying for a break—any kind of a break that would give Vic a chance to make a drop-kick. Still I knew that one goal from the field wouldn't do it. It really looked hopeless, but I kept hoping. I had two reasons for hoping. The first was that anything can happen. The second—I had confidence in Vic—just blind, unreasoning confidence.

Once Pelion caught an Ossian forward pass, and, after a futile attempt to rush, Vic attempted a field goal from the fifty-five-yard line. It started straight and it had the distance; but a little puff of wind carried it off.

With about two minutes left to play, it was Pelion's ball on Ossia's fifty-yard line. On the first play, Vic opened a hole as wide as a gate, and Holy Jensen went through and plunged along for fifteen yards before the secondary defense brought him down. They tried it again, but this time Ossia closed in quickly, and only a scant yard was the result. Then a forward pass was grounded, and a run around right end lost three yards. Fourth down, a little over a minute left, and the goal thirty-five yards away. It was the crisis. I sat there desperately trying to think what to do. But I knew it was no use. Vic was running the team. And he had a better head than I did.

Then Vic called the team together; they stood for a few seconds with their arms around each other's shoulders, then trotted to their places. Shrimp stood with one hand resting on the rump of the center.

"Fourteen—nine—eleven—sixty-one."

THE signal for a drop-kick! Vic dropped back, while the fullback filled the position he had left vacant. A thrilling silence settled over the stands. The center snapped the ball to Vic, and for one instant he stood there, poised, the ball held in both hands in front of him, his eyes sweeping the field. The Ossia forwards were breaking through. Why didn't he kick? A roar broke from the crowd. Then Vic

tucked the ball under his right arm, side-stepped to the left, and started to run. A big Ossian linesman, coming in hard, he met with a perfect stiff-arm and sent him sprawling. Two other men hit him, but he shook them off without breaking his stride. He was by the line of scrimmage then, and had gained headway. He was not fast; but he ran with such tremendous power that it seemed as if the hands that clutched at him simply slipped off.

Ten yards more, and only one player—the Ossian safety—between him and the goal. The safety was a fast man, and a fearless tackler. He was running at an angle, however, and Vic veered off toward the sidelines. At the five-yard line the safety made his tackle, and caught Vic by the foot. Down he came, but the ball rested not more than a yard from the goal.

Again the teams lined up. The noise was terrific—just one great roar from Ossia and Pelion alike. I couldn't hear the signal. But Jensen took the ball and started toward Vic's tackle. Ossia had anticipated the play and massed at that point. But as Holy hit the line Vic threw out his arm, caught him around the waist, and together they lunged forward—over the goal.

IF the goal was kicked, I didn't know it.

I couldn't see. I've been mixed up in football for twenty years, but I never saw such a scene as was enacted there on the football field of old Pelion that afternoon. For fifteen minutes the Pelion cohorts yelled and danced and did every mad thing that men can do under excitement. I found myself hugging a little man who kept pounding me with both hands and screaming in my ear, "Victor! Victor! Victor!" When I came to I found it was Prexy himself. Then the students captured the players, and Prexy, and me, hoisted us to their shoulders and serpentine to Spurgeon Hall, where they cheered and speechified and sang until Prexy had to call it off.

Troubles? Oh, a coach has his troubles all right—what with eligibility rules and one thing and another. But he has his triumphs too. And it isn't only in the victories that he gets his reward, either. It's the men—the boys that turn into men while he's coaching them—like Victor Maddox. I'm going to visit Vic and Alice this summer on their ranch. They've named their boy after me. But they don't call him Delbert. No sir, they call him Coach. *Coach*—what do you think of that?



Easy Street Experts

A more amusing pair of scalawaags have never appeared in contemporary fiction than Messrs. Brass & Clumber—but this story, "The Rajah's Commission," is, so to speak, "just Brass."

By BERTRAM ATKEY

DESPITE the regrettable necessity which drove the Honorable John Brass to remember with the utmost strictness the adage that "business is business," his friendship with Lord Fortworth daily grew firmer—the last application of cement thereto being, so to speak, a certain lunch in which they both indulged a few weeks after their Mogador trip. The lunch finished, Mr. Brass gazed contentedly across the table at his friend Lord Fortworth, and Lord Fortworth gazed contentedly back at Mr. Brass.

"What a lunch!" sighed the Honorable John devoutly, and relapsed into thought.

Fortworth did not answer. He gravely nodded his head.

The lunch had been in the nature of a farewell meal. Lady Fortworth, who was paying a visit to America, had written to her husband instructing him to come over and spend a few weeks there with her before both returned to England, and Lord Fortworth was going quietly like a well-be-

haved husband. In three days he was sailing. He had been desperately anxious that Mr. Brass should go with him, but the Honorable John wanted to "take things easy" for a while. He had been doing well for a considerable time past, and wished to employ a few months in learning to shoot and in getting an idea of golf. Be it remembered, this was in the Honorable John's early days. Hence he had decided to relieve the nobleman of his company for a while. He had already relieved him of more than enough money to pay the expenses of his "rest."

Suddenly the telephone on the table at Lord Fortworth's elbow gave a musical imitation of an agitated rattlesnake.

Fortworth took off the receiver, growled into the instrument, and listened a few seconds. Then he proffered the receiver to Mr. Brass.

"Your Chink wants to speak to you," he said. "He is a good boy, that. Never understood why he left me to go to you,

though. Queer oirds, these Chinks," he said, and relapsed into his chair.

Sing seemed almost excited.

He swiftly informed the Honorable John that the early afternoon editions of the evening papers contained a curious personal advertisement which he would like his "master" to see.

The Honorable John replaced the receiver on its hook, and with a short but ready lie to his host (for explanation) glanced through an evening paper that a well-trained and expensive-looking servant had just brought in. It was brief but to the point. One Lucien Santoin announced that he desired to get into communication with the person who had given shelter in his flat to a gentleman of high rank, who had lost his memory some few months previously—and the Honorable John knew that the person in question was himself. He felt a thrill of excitement as he turned to his host, for Lucien Santoin was confidential secretary to His Highness the Rajah of Jolapore—the "gentleman of high rank" in question. Mr. Brass had always had an idea that something good was coming to him from the potentate in question when he had recovered his memory—or, at any rate, the greater part of it. He had been keeping a fairly keen and comprehensive eye upon the Rajah and his suite at the Southern Grand Hotel during the past six months, either in person or by proxy; but the process of recovering one's memory seemed to be lengthy, and he had not expected to get in touch with the Rajah again for a considerable time to come. But this advertisement looked as though His Highness had taken a turn for the better.

HE swiftly excused himself to Lord Fortworth on the plea of urgent family affairs, and took a taxicab to the hotel.

Monsieur Santoin, a middle-aged Frenchman with a singularly discreet air, was expecting him.

"The Honorable Brass, is it not?" queried the discreet one, who evidently had discovered that the original name "Coomber Huish" was merely a *nom-de-guerre*. "I have not yet forgotten the brave hospitality you extended to my master." He drew a chair forward for the caller who, faultlessly dressed, prosperous-looking, and wearing a superb fur-lined coat, seemed a wealthier and more important individual than the keen and watchful man who had sheltered the Rajah. The eyes of Monsieur

Santoin glistened swiftly over Mr. Brass and came suddenly to rest full upon the blandly smiling orbs of the adventurer.

"Mr. Brass," he said earnestly, "I am your true friend. You are a man of the world. I, too, am a man of the world. It is a good thing to be men of the world; but men of the world must live, and to live one needs money—"

"Certainly," said the Honorable John. "Certainly a man must live. But he's not likely to make a fortune rescuing Rajahs on the nod. On the nod, mind you, Santoin. What did I get for saving him from a gang of crooks that would have skinned him alive before they'd done with him—what did I get? An unsigned, unstamped promise to give me a roomful of gold, which was never kept. That's what I got!" He simulated disgust; but Santoin smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"All in good time," he said. "His Highness has recovered his memory but one day. You have rendered him a great service—and he will not forget that. Above all, remember this—that I, Lucien Santoin, am your true friend; all others serving His Highness are sneaks and vipers and *cannaille* that I spit upon."

For a second he was purely French. Evidently he had a private feud with some one whom Brass would shortly meet.

"Your true friend, dear monsieur. Presently you will meet a yellow-souled, crawling reptile called Mirza Khan. He will, perhaps, tell you many things. They will be lies—all lies. Perhaps he will say that he is a friend to you. But that is not true. He has not any friends. Everybody is his enemy. He is his own true friend only. Beware of him, Monsieur Brass. But I am another man—a true man, you will see that very easily. Guard against that yellow-hearted crocodile and listen to me!"

He dropped his voice to a whisper.

"His Highness was drugged by a lady who desired to hold him for sake of the rewards that would be offered. You saved him from her, but the drug caused him to lose his memory. Now his memory has come back, and he wishes that lady to be captured for punishment. But how to capture her? Who knows where she is? We know not; the police know not—and you, dear monsieur, it is not possible that you know?"

He paused, his eyes narrowing. But if it was a trap to catch Mr. Brass he had set it much too clumsily. He may have

been a wily fowler, but he was dealing with a very much wiler fowl. The Honorable John's face was blanker than brick walls; he did not answer.

"It is not possible that Monsieur Brass knows where this lady is that has drugged a Rajah and is not yet punished?" he asked in his silkiest tone.

THEN the Honorable John knew for certain what he was after.

"Know?" he said innocently. "Of course I know."

The pupils of M. Santoin's expressive eyes darkened, dilating.

"Ah, that is a good thing! His Highness will be very much pleased. Frankly speaking, where is the lady, dear monsieur?"

The Honorable John smiled.

"Frankly speaking, dear Mr. Santoin, I will not say unless you give me an awful lot of money—frankly speaking!" he said.

Santoin smiled, but there was a touch of discomfiture in his smile. He shrugged.

"Ah, monsieur, you are truly a man of the world! Come now, let us begin again. This time we will be just plain, simple, straightforward—two reasonable men of the world talking business together like friends. We trust each other perfectly—" He paused a second, listening. Then, lowering his voice he whispered rapidly, with deadly earnestness: "Monsieur Brass, I will pay you one hundred pounds for the address of the lady." He took from his pocket a small bundle of bank notes. "Quick!"

The Honorable John took the notes.

"Certainly," he said with a chuckle. "It's this. Write it down: 'Kate the Gun, Over the Road, New York, U. S. A.' She told me so herself—and she knows!"

M. Santoin looked puzzled.

"Over the Road," he whispered. "Where is 'Over the Road'?"

"'Over the Road' is jail, my lad. Jail, Lucien. That's where Kate is—and where she'll be staying for a good many years to come," said Mr. Brass cheerfully, and turned to the door which had opened just as he finished.

From the tail of his eye he saw Santoin's furious face even as he turned.

A FAT Indian, the color of an arable field, in a dark-brown frock-coat and lightish white linen trousers was standing in the doorway. He bowed elaborately.

"Good day, sar," he said ponderously, in quite reasonable English. "You have come to see His Highness, responding to the announcement in the newspapers. His Highness is capable of seeing you now. Will you come this way, sar?" He noted the slight movement of Santoin as that seeker after addresses made as though to get to the Rajah. "M. Santoin, His Highness has not sent for you. He desires this interview to be private. When His Highness asks for you I will make great haste to inform you. This way, sar!" he added in a deep pompous voice to the Honorable John, and went out.

Mr. Brass followed him into a small anteroom. No sooner had the door closed than Mirza Khan turned to the adventurer.

"I wish to say to you, sar, that I am your true friend above all others. Bestow no attention upon the French rag-picker you have just had the good fortune to leave. He is natural liar, scoundrel and an insect!" The last evidently was intended as an insult of the deadliest. "I shall prove to you, sar, that I am true friend."

HE took from a pocket a ring that contained a stone which resembled a diamond. The Honorable John felt that he wanted it the instant he saw it.

"If you will accept this poor ring, sar, I hope that you will permit me to flatter myself that you consider me your true friend," he said without a change of countenance. "Be seated, sar; I will now proceed to His Highness and inform him where the lady lives, and that you are here."

He had not given up the ring. But Mr. Brass held out his hand for it.

"You are indeed a true friend!" he said warmly. "I would trust you, Mirza, my lad"—he took the ring from the slightly reluctant fingers of the Indian and dropped it into his pocket—"I would trust you with any mortal thing of mine that I did not require for myself."

He beamed kindly upon Mirza Khan, into whose eyes a doubtful look had suddenly crept. But he pulled himself together.

"It is great honor for me, sar," he said in his deep, serious voice. "I will now tell His Highness where the lady lives."

He paused expectantly.

He was much cleverer than Santoin.

"All right," said Mr. Brass densely. "I'll wait."

But Mirza Khan waited also.

"Give me the address, sar, and I will go hurriedly," he said.

But the Honorable John wagged his head playfully.

"Sorry, Mirza," he said; "but that happens to be one of the things I require for myself. Anything else, old man—anything else you like. But not Kate's address. I'm sorry to disappoint such a true friend, but—I have my reasons!"

MIRZA KHAN glared. He looked as though he would have liked entirely to ruin the Honorable John's health. But before he had time to speak, somebody coughed in the next room. The sound seemed suddenly to pull Mirza Khan together. He even managed to imitate a smile.

"This way, sar," he said; and added rather feebly, "your true friend."

Then he ushered the Honorable John into the inner room, where, lying on a big lounge, was a young man whom he instantly recognized as the Rajah of Jolapore.

Mirza Khan bowed profoundly, spoke quickly and subserviently, and departed.

The Rajah looked at Mr. Brass and his eyes seemed to twinkle. The Honorable John liked the look of him—now that his mind was clear.

"How do you do?" said the potentate affably, with a vague varsity air about him. "I am glad to see you. I owe you an enormous debt of gratitude. Indeed I have only just realized the extent of my debt to you. But for the truly friendly—"

The Honorable John raised his hand.

"No, Rajah," he said bluntly. "Don't you pull that friendly stuff, too—er—I beg pardon! Don't think me rude, but to tell the truth, I have made so many funny friends that—that is, perhaps I'd better explain."

The Rajah, with a slightly surprised look, indicated a seat.

"Certainly," he said politely.

Mr. Brass related the curious welcome he had received from Santoin and Mirza Khan. At the end of it the Rajah was laughing as he had not laughed for some months.

"It is a good thing that you did not tell them the address," he said. "You would never have seen me if you had told either of them. You see, they know that I am going to give a thousand pounds to the person who gives me the address of the lady."

The Honorable John opened his mouth,

but on second thought, closed it. Perhaps the Rajah had more rewards to mention.

"You know where she lives?" inquired the Rajah.

"I do," said Mr. Brass; but he did not volunteer to give the address.

"I will talk with my servants presently," said the Rajah irrelevantly, but with a glint in his eye that did not promise anything considerable in the reward line for the "true friends."

There was a little pause. Then the Rajah sat up erectly like a man who has come to a decision.

"Tell me the address," he said, "and I will tell you why I wish to know it."

"She's in jail in America," said Mr. Brass.

The Rajah frowned.

"I'm afraid you'll have to let her off," continued the Honorable John, noting the frown. "For if they sentence her on each charge they'll bring against her, and the sentences aint concurrent, why, the poor girl will have about two hundred and twenty-four years to serve. And that wont leave her much time to attend to the sentence she'd get for kidnaping you—if you follow me," he concluded.

The Rajah's frown deepened until he looked very Indian indeed.

"You don't want to be vindictive, Rajah. When she gets what's coming to her she'll have all she can accommodate in this life," urged Mr. Brass affably.

THE Rajah glared at him.

"I wish to marry her," he said shortly, and the Honorable John nearly fell out of his chair.

"What?" he inquired.

"She is the first handsome woman I have met with courage enough to fear nothing," explained the astonishing potentate, and waved his hand impatiently to indicate his distaste to discuss his feelings further.

Mr. Brass shook his head.

"It's very awkward—very awkward indeed," he said.

"Tell me," said the Rajah evenly, "tell me precisely how much money would be required to effect the release of the lady."

Mr. Brass pondered. He knew nothing at all about American prisons, and had no idea as to what money it would cost to arrange for Kate's escape or whether it could be "arranged" at all. What he wanted was an idea as to how much the Rajah would stand.

"The man's a king," he mused, "and I suppose he's pretty well off. And naturally he expects to be treated as a king.

"Rajah," he said aloud, "speaking simply as man to man I couldn't get Kate back here in England for less than twenty thousand at the very best. Twenty thousand pounds—and not a ha'penny under it!"

He stared firmly but kindly at the man on the couch. Rather to his astonishment the Rajah remained calm—quite calm.

"I see," he said. "And how long will it take?"

The Honorable John pondered again.

"I don't know, Rajah—I cannot say. I couldn't promise less than three months. I might have to pension off half the prison guards, from the boss downward. It'll come high. I warn you freely and fully. It might run to twice the money, and take a year to do. It's a risk, and I tell you so."

The Rajah rose.

"When can you start?" he inquired.

"Oh, in three days," said Mr. Brass.

"That will do excellently. You shall have a credit of thirty thousand pounds arranged for you at a New York bank. As to the discharge of my personal debt of gratitude to you, we will talk when you bring the lady home—if that is satisfactory to you."

"Oh, quite satisfactory!" said the Honorable John blandly.

The Rajah smiled.

"Mirza Khan will accompany you. He shall not bother you, I promise that. If you will call here before you go, my financial secretary will arrange money matters with you. Only—you must not fail."

"Certainly not," said the Honorable John.

He became aware that Mirza Khan had appeared at his side, silent as a fat brown ghost; and, with him, he left the Rajah.

In the anteroom he turned to Mirza Khan.

"Here's your ring, Mirza," he said. "I never meant to keep it. Must have my little joke, you know."

"Thank you, sar," said Mirza Khan, a look of relief on his face.

Santoin also received back his hundred pounds. Then the Honorable John left the hotel.

"The Rajah'll ruin himself over Kate if he doesn't look out," he soliloquized as he stood on the steps waiting for a taxi.

The first thing he did on his return to his flat was carefully to look up in a work

of reference the amount of the Rajah of Jolapore's income.

It was estimated at slightly over a million pounds per annum. The Honorable John ordered in the old brandy and sulked for the remainder of the afternoon.

"If only I'd known!" he wistfully repeated over and over again. "If only I'd known! I'd never have allowed myself to be screwed down like that! But I'll make up for it when it comes to the reward of merit due to me. I will that, yes, sir!"

ALL the financial arrangements were made to the Honorable John's satisfaction, and carrying about fifteen hundred pounds cash for emergencies, he crossed the Atlantic with Lord Fortworth, much to that nobleman's delight—and loss, for Mr. Brass magicked eight hundred pounds from him between Queenstown and New York at poker. Mirza Khan was there, but he was not obtrusive, although he was never far away from the Honorable John.

During the voyage it occurred to Mr. Brass to confide in his wealthy friend, who, he conceived, being well known in New York, might be able to help him.

"I'm really going to the States on behalf of an old friend of mine," he told Lord Fortworth. "The black sport you see always hanging round near me is a sort of secretary of his. He's in awful trouble. He's a man you'd never think could have any trouble in the world, but he has. It only shows you. The girl he's in love with is in jail in New York. I don't deny she's broken the law more than once, but, still, my poor pal's in love with her, wants to marry her, and as he's wealthy enough to put her out of reach of temptation"—Lord Fortworth nodded and looked sympathetic—"why, he's asked me to represent him and do what I can to get her released. Now, can you give me a tip, Fortworth? You know America pretty well, and I don't. I'm a kind of mug, as you know. But I'm an honest, well-meanin' mug, and I'd like your help."

Fortworth pondered.

"Money any object?" he asked.

"Well, not in reason," the Honorable John said cautiously, and the millionaire's face cleared.

"Then she's as good as free. We must find out where she is first. After that it's a matter of money. How much does your friend want to spend?" There was a touch of patronage in Fortworth's tone.

"Oh, I don't know. Matter of five thousand pounds, perhaps."

Fortworth shook his head doubtfully.

"Might be done for that—but there won't be much margin if I know anything about grafters. What's the limit he'd put up?"

The Honorable John decided to give his friend a shock.

"Well, he could afford to go up to a million—but I doubt if he would," replied Mr. Brass gravely.

"Snakes in Hades, man, you could empty a jail almost anywhere for that! Who is your pal?"

"Oh, he's a Rajah—Rajah of Jolapore. Place in India!"

"Is that so?" Lord Fortworth reflected. "I'd like to meet him some time," he said, for he was a natural financier.

"Well, lend me a hand, and I'll take care that you do when we get back," said the Honorable John carelessly. Fortworth agreed absently. Already he had a high-class financial "lemon" ripening for the Rajah in his mind. He had no compunction about helping to release the girl, for the impression which a further brief chat with Mr. Brass left upon him was that the damsel in question was a pretty little lady who had fallen to sudden temptation and stolen a fistful of diamonds. Merely that. Lord Fortworth, in fact, felt quite sorry for her.

TWO days later they landed. Lady Fortworth met her husband and took instant charge of him. He and Mr. Brass had planned a seven-day "look round" New York before the nobleman joined his wife in earnest, but that little idea went gracefully up into the air before the lady had surrounded them two minutes. Lady Fortworth was a woman of character, and was not quite sure that she approved of the intimacy of her husband and the Honorable John.

"That's all right," said Mr. Brass, to the lively expressions of regret which Lord Fortworth cautiously began to utter when his wife was momentarily out of earshot. "I've got a few friends in this city I want to see, and I'll call on you in about a week. I want to find out what jail poor Kitty is inhabitin' just at present. When I find out I'll come and see you. Now I'm off. You go and make love to your wife like a good little baron."

They grinned and parted.

Mr. Brass—with Mirza carefully in tow—lost no time in looking up his brother Tony, and Fanchon his wife. These two were detectives, working with Westerton's, the detective agency. Fortunately, he decided to call at the office first. He was only just in time—indeed, he met Fanchon leaving the building. She was starting for San Francisco in chase after a bogus princess who had just got out of the city with about a hundred thousand dollars belonging to sundry lion-hunting New York hostesses. Fanchon had exactly two minutes to spare. But in those two minutes Mr. Brass learned that Tony was in France hunting for a bank cashier who had no business to be there; that Fanchon was delighted to see him; that things were prospering; that she hoped he was no longer a "crook," that she thought he ought to get married; and that—in answer to a point-blank question—Kate the Gun was in "Bed of Roses" for twenty-five years.

"What's 'Bed of Roses?' Where is it? I must see Kate," asked the Honorable John. "It means over a hundred thousand dollars to me, Fanchon!"

Fanchon stared, took a card from her case, scrawled a name and address on it, and signaled to a taxi.

"Go to the man on this card—say I sent you," gasped Fanchon, and jumped into the motor. "Good-by," she called over her shoulder, and a second later she was gone.

The Honorable John gazed at the card for a moment. Then, placing it carefully in his pocket, he returned to his hotel.

"Daniel MacQuoid, attorney-at-law," he said thoughtfully to himself as he went. "Tomorrow'll do for you. We'll have a look round before we start work, Mirza, my lad."

"Yes, sir," said Mirza.

DANIEL MACQUOID was the owner of the name Fanchon had written on the card. He does not enter this story to any extent. He was a lean, lantern-jawed individual with a mouth like a rat-trap, and on the following day the Honorable John, calling at his office, learned from him that "Bed of Roses" was the popular name for a new type of prison which some well-meaning and influential visionary then in power had introduced. The idea was to surround the prisoners with all the comforts of home life, and by judicious hypnotism gradually quench all that was ill in a woman's nature and develop all that was

good. The Honorable John smiled as he pictured the professors lining up to mesmerize Kate. He gathered from Mr. MacQuoid that the Chief Warden or Governor was named Hoit—Colonel Jackson Hoit—and, after a few words at the telephone, that Kate's number was sixty-six. More information than this Mr. MacQuoid did not offer, and not much liking the severely legal look of the attorney, Mr. Brass did not prolong the interview. He left the office and called on Lord Fortworth. Luckily he found his friend alone, and was able to put to him a scheme which he had thought out, a scheme which met with the nobleman's enthusiastic approval.

THREE nights later Mr. Brass sat in a private room at one of the best restaurants in New York dining with Lord Fortworth and Colonel Jackson Hoit—the Governor of "Bed of Roses."

Exactly how Fortworth had been able to arrange to dine the Colonel so quickly Mr. Brass did not know, nor did he greatly care. The Colonel was there, and all he and Fortworth had to do was to name a price that the Governor would accept for arranging that Kate the Gun should "escape" some night, and get a fair start before the alarm was given.

"He'll be easy," Fortworth had told Mr. Brass over the telephone to notify him of the dinner.

But the Honorable John, looking at the rough-cut face of the Governor, felt that Fortworth might easily be wrong.

Colonel Hoit ate and drank very thoroughly indeed, and considerably before the end of the meal he was what he described as being pretty well "lit up."

At any rate he was sufficiently lit up to confess that, free-born Irish-American though he was, he admired a lord above most other things. He admitted that, although he was proud of being Governor of the new women's prison, he would have preferred, on the whole, being a lord. Why, he did not quite know; it was just an instinct, he said. He had worked his way up to what he was from a navvy, and he had enjoyed the struggle upward every inch of the way. But sometimes it had occurred to him that he would have enjoyed being a lord all the time even more. There was no saying, of course—perhaps he was wrong—but, well, that was his fancy. He laughed uproariously and abolished his eighth glass of champagne.

THEN the Honorable John and his host fell to work. Insidiously enough they brought the conversation round to the Colonel's "patients" and the new treatment.

"There's nothing in the hypnotic dope," he declared. "Why, the professors haven't got horse-power enough to mesmerize half the fairies we get sent along. There's one there now—sixty-six her number is; I forget her name—you couldn't hypnotize with a steam-hammer. No, hypnotizing is a dream. But it'll pass off in time, and then, maybe, some of the girls'll settle down to serving their time properly."

He refilled his glass and pulled at a cigar. He had stuck steadily to champagne throughout the evening, and showed no signs yet of leaving it.

"But it's a wearing life," he went on. "If it was not for my pension I would not stick to it."

"Supposing a king, or a representative of a king offered you four times the amount of your pension cash down," said Fortworth jokingly, "in return for a small favor, would you take it?"

"I would that," replied the Colonel.

"Well, you're going to get a chance, Colonel," threw in the Honorable John. "Go ahead, Fortworth!"

Lord Fortworth leaned forward, looking keenly into the slightly "boiled" eyes of the Governor.

"How much do you want to give Number Sixty-six a clear road to the outside of your jail and an hour's grace to get away?" he asked, lowering his voice. He looked at Mr. Brass, who nodded. "Will you take fifty thousand dollars?"

The Irish-American stood up suddenly, swaying a little.

"I will not!" he shouted, and glared and bristled at them like an angry dog.

They stared, astonished.

"I thought you had some scheme of the kind when I saw how free you were with the wealthy water!" He indicated the champagne bottles contemptuously. "And so I laid for you and now I've got you where I want you." He sneered. "There's sure plenty of grafters runnin' round the city—but I aint wan of 'em. And—"

"Get out, Brass," said Fortworth suddenly. "I can fix things better without you. I want a private chat with Colonel Hoit."

The Honorable John got. He collected his hat and coat and Mirza Khan, and departed without delay. Fortworth, who

knew America, said he could explain, and Mr. Brass believed him. In his opinion it was neither the time nor the place for tactless contradiction.

TWO days later he and Mirza Khan were leaning over the rail of a liner bound for England.

"N. G., Mirza—N. B. G. No Blooming Go," said the Honorable John regretfully. "In fact, laddie, we can shake hands with ourselves we aren't in jail as well as poor old Kate. How Lord Fortworth managed to square the Colonel I don't know. Anyhow, he did it. I'll get the facts when he returns to England. The trouble was we ran up against an honest man. Sounds silly, don't it? But we did. There's never much doing when you run up against an honest man. They don't want anything they don't honestly earn, and so there aint much in the way of bait you can use to catch 'em. Now, with men like you and me, Mirza, it's different. We're always open to make a trifle, aren't we?"

Mirza shot a glance at him that invited confidences. Mr. Brass continued placidly:

"Take us, now, for instance. Here I am with about twenty-five thousand quid of your master's money within reach of my hand. But here you are with instructions not to lose sight of me until I've reported to the Rajah. Now, suppose, I wanted to keep that money, Mirza—which would be only human—what should I do? Well, I should say, 'Mirza, my son, I'm going to pass you five thousand pounds and charge it to expenses, just because I'm your true friend. If I do this, however, I shall expect you to keep your mouth shut when I explain to your master how it was the trip was so expensive and unsuccessful. So shut your mouth now and forever henceforth.' What would you say to that, Mirza Khan?"

Without the faintest shadow of hesitation Mirza Khan stretched out his hand.

"I am your true friend, Mr. Brass," he said. "What do I know? Am I not stranger in America? Oh, yes! How can I keep track of such a man as you are in a strange place? I lose you the day we leave the ship. I go to bank where I have authority to ask about the money my master has sent there. They say, 'Yes, the money is here.' I say, 'I will remain at this place and watch for Mister Brass.' And I remain. But the time passes and I become empty. I say, 'For a little while

I will eat, and after I have eaten I will return to watch.' And I go to eat. When I return I inquire again if the money is there." The fat rascal's sides shook with noiseless mirth as he continued: "Oh, no—the money is gone. Mister Brass came with his papers—it was all in order, and we have paid the money to him.' Then I fall to hunting for the Honorable John Brass. The days pass, and on fifth day I meet him. He is dejected. And when I question him he tells me that he has failed. He has spent the whole money, but those that he bribed laughed at him after receiving payment, and refrained from helping him. And I say, 'Let us return to my master. For it is better to return with empty hands than not to return at all.' And so we return."

Mr. Brass looked at the fat rogue with unwilling admiration.

"Mirza, my lad, you're colored champion of the world's heavyweight liars," he said.

"I am your true friend, Mr. Brass," replied Mirza ironically.

"Ah, well, come below, and I'll count out the notes." And they left the rail.

IMMEDIATELY he reached London the Honorable John, delaying only long enough to make at his bank a deposit of a magnitude which caused the manager to smile, went to the Southern Grand Hotel and very shortly was ushered into the presence of the Rajah.

"Well?" said the ruler of Jolapore rather casually.

"Nothing doing, Your Highness," responded the Honorable John. "I'm not clever enough for New York. I'm a simple old British stick-in-the-mud—steady, solid, honest, and dull as ditch-water. Kate's quodded for ever and ever. Twenty-five years in fact. They've got her and they mean to keep her. I bribed the prison staff, from the Governor to the cook and back up again, but once they'd got the money they just laughed and told me to go chase myself. In fact, they just skinned me like an eel. I've got no excuse to make, Rajah. I've tried. I've failed. I apologize." He fumbled in his pocket. "I've saved a little from the wreck—only a little, but the best I could manage."

He drew out a check of his own for five hundred pounds.

"It's all I could save for you out of the expense allowances. Those vultures in New York got the rest. Take the check,

Rajah. I could have said it was gone with the rest, and have made a trifle for myself. But that's not my way of doing business, Rajah. Solid, honest, genuine—but a bit of a mug. That's me, Your Highness. Take it. I saved your life once, but if you'll set off my failure against that and cry quits, I shall be glad—proud."

As he finished a curtain at the far end of the big apartment slid back and a lady entered. Evidently she imagined the Rajah to be alone. The Honorable John allowed his glance to flash over her once only. But it was enough to inform him that here stood one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. She was tall, slender, queenly. Too dark to be European, with extraordinary bronze hair, curiously straight dark eyebrows, a cold, clean-cut face, rather thin but perfectly-shaped lips, a nose with a faint, hardly perceptible curve, and steady, black, heavy-lidded eyes. She looked at the Honorable John with a strange poise of her head that was beautiful in a queer, boding kind of way. It occurred to him that she looked like a woman with a tragic temper. A half-glance confirmed the impression—her beauty was of an ominous kind, ill-starred, mysterious, Egyptian. She spoke to the Rajah in a cold, clear voice, rather full, using a language which Mr. Brass did not recognize. The Rajah answered her in the same tongue—it seemed to the Honorable John with a touch of apology—and she disappeared again.

The Rajah turned to him.

"Mr. Brass," he said quickly, as though anxious to get the business finished, "so far from your mission having proved a failure, it is a success—a bewildering success. When I sent you to America to rescue the criminal who doubtless has well earned any punishment she may be undergoing, I think I could not have been fully recovered from my illness." He dropped his voice a little. "Mr. Brass, I can never be sufficiently grateful that the person you went to set free is not standing here with you at this moment."

Quite involuntarily he glanced at the curtains at the end of the room.

The Honorable John smiled.

"Say no more, Your Highness," he remarked, "I understand—and if you will forgive a man who has saved your life say-

ing so, I congratulate you on your choice. That lady will make a queen to be proud of, whereas Kate would probably have pinched your crown and pawned it."

The Rajah ignored the congratulations and handed the Honorable John's check back to him.

"I cannot, of course, permit you to pay me that money, Mr. Brass," he said. "My debt to you already is tremendous. It is my misfortune that I can think of no way to repay you—except financially. Will you permit me to repay you so?"

"Rajah," said the Honorable John with manly simplicity, "I will."

"Will you, then, give my financial secretary the name and address of your bankers?"

"Certainly," he said, and half turned.

"Good-by, Your Highness," he added.

The Rajah waved a friendly hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Brass," he said, and the adventurer departed in search of the secretary.

HE found him and gave him the names and addresses of exactly five banks.

"Tell His Highness he can pay in at any or all of these on my behalf," he said humorously. "I don't suppose any of 'em will refuse the sum the Rajah will want to pay."

Then he left for home and a dinner which Sing had spent the greater part of the day preparing.

"I estimate that the Rajah will pay in a thousand at each bank," he said gayly, and lit a cigar.

Two days later he made a round of the banks. The Rajah had paid two thousand pounds into each of them!

The Honorable John stood on the curb outside the last bank and did a little mental arithmetic.

"That makes me worth quite a little old lot of money," he said at last, and drew in his breath. He looked slowly round him at the houses, at the people, at the traffic, at the sky. Then, slowly letting his breath out again, he summed up.

"This lets you out of the crooked game for good. Honesty is the best policy, they say, after all. And so I'll try it—for a change!"

But he didn't, for he couldn't. Dishonesty was not so much a habit of his as an affliction.



The Skunk

"It aint the pig; it's the principle," explains the aggressor in the strange feud on a river steamboat so vividly described in this unusual story.

By BEN LUCIEN BURMAN

CAPTAIN BROWN of the *Vevay Queen* pressed his sparkling forehead against the sparkingly wet window of the pilot-house. A switch clicked under his long fingers; a cylinder of blinding whiteness shot from the great lens fixed to the smokestack and sprayed over the misty waters of the Ohio until its dazzling fingers touched a submerging shanty-boat and the threshing arms of a swimmer.

"Throw him a line!" trumpeted the Captain.

A rope coiled out from a silhouetted stevedore on the deck below; the swimmer caught it and clambered on board. The Captain relinquished the wheel to the youthful cub pilot, and striding down the stairway, sympathetically surveyed the shivering newcomer.

"Sorry we smashed yuh up," he asserted, his towering form bending to thrust off a weed tangled about the sleeve of the stunted shanty-boatman. "But yuh had no business runnin' at night without lights. We aint cats, yuh know. We can't see in the dark."

The gaunt castaway shook the water from his head, dog-fashion, and watched the Captain with cadaverous sullenness. "Don't need no lights. River's mine jest as much as 'tis yers, aint it? I know yuh smart aleck steamboat captains. Like to hit us, 'cause we aint big as yuh. But I'll git my rights."

The skipper shrugged his benignant shoulders. "A man half drowned is as bad as a man half drunk. Yuh aint responsible for what yuh're sayin'. Kung, here, will give yuh a suit of my clothes an' a cabin. We'll talk it over in the mornin'."

The short figure of a Chinaman standing beside the capstan trudged off with the short, streaming figure of the refugee; the Captain climbed loftily back to the pilot-house and took the helm. He had swerved the vessel past a dredge, its thick black arms with their dangling ropes stretched out like three great gallows miraculously placed in mid-channel, when a shuffling footstep caused him to turn his head.

"What yuh wantin', Kung?"

"Cap'n um good to Kung. Cap'n um

save Kung bad fellahs N' Oleans, make um Kung cook."

"All right, Kung. But that aint exactly news, yuh know. What yuh wantin'?"

"Cap'n um good to Kung. Kung um watch allee time fur Cap'n. Kung not like um new fellah pick up river."

"What's the matter with 'im?"

"Help um take off suit. Got knife—big knife. Allee lite nigger got knife. Allee lite Chinamen got knife. White man got knife—bad."

The mariner laughed. "Yuh figger things out, don't yuh, Kung? Yuh're a good fellow. But don't yuh worry. That knife aint a-goin' to be used."

MEDITATING, he sat by the wheel, until the sleepy lights of slumbering Kettle Town appeared over the bow, when he ordered the boat tied up for the night, and crawled gigantically into bed. His first act on awakening in the morning was to enter the cabin of his accident-born passenger. The derelict, lost in a voluminous nightgown, was sitting on the sheets of his couch, his back against a pillow.

"How yuh feelin'?" asked the Captain genially.

For a moment the shanty-boatman continued to eat greedily the steak on the tray before him; then with somber reluctance he thrust it away. "Goin' to give me my rights?"

"Yuh got no rights. But I'm sorry for yuh. An' I don't want no trouble. I got a little shanty-boat down at Natchez. It's a good boat, a better boat than yers was. I'll give it to yuh, an' twenty-five dollars to boot. That's square, aint it?"

The castaway grunted. "I ketched a mussel-pearl yesterd'y. Yuh made me lose that too. It was worth five hundred dollars. More'n that! A nigger what seen me ketch it told me."

"There never was a pearl caught anywhere in the Ohio worth more'n fifty." The Captain's eyelids twitched with quiet anger. "Yuh either got a powerful good imagination, or yuh're jest a plain liar."

A gaunt arm darted beneath the pillow. "Take that back, yuh low-down—"

The gaunt arm quivered in the crushing grip of the Captain's burly palm. "Aint no need finishin' yer sentence," rumbled the mariner.

The castaway quizzically scrutinized the massive countenance of his captor. "What's yer name?" he mumbled.

"Aint much need for yuh to know, is there? Anyways, it's Brown—Captain Brown."

"What was it afore that?"

The captor's grip relaxed. "Before what?"

"Afore yuh changed it."

The skipper's fingers beat a meditative tattoo with the fork upon the glass tray.

"Don't know what yuh're meanin'."

"I thought it looked like yuh last night. An' when I heard yuh talk jest now, I was sure. Yer name used to be Zeb Lilly, didn't it?"

The fingers put down the fork noiselessly. "Who are yuh?"

The castaway thrust back the flapping sleeve of the nightgown which swathed his arm and exposed a bullet-scar at the elbow.

"I got that in the willows on Big Black. Yuh know me now?"

The Captain nodded sadly. "Yes," he answered. "I know."

"Git yerself a knife."

"What am I needin' with a knife?"

"What a knife's fur—to fight! Yuh an' me. It ought to be a good fight—after twenty years."

DYED by the sunlight circling through the cabin window, the navigator's bronzed cheeks twinged in vivid whiteness. "We aint goin' to fight," he announced gravely. "Yuh aint goin' to bring yer feud business here. I killed three men in that feud for nothin'. It makes me sick when I remembers of it. All for nothin'. I aint goin' to kill no more. As soon as I got some sense, I knowed it was wrong. That's what I run away from the mountains an' changed my name for—to git shut of shootin' an' murderin'. An yuh aint goin' to start it on my boat. Put away yer knife."

"That aint what the mountain folks says is why yuh run away. They says yuh was a coward."

The skipper shrugged his stoic shoulders, then stalked dejectedly to the doorway. A blow from behind felled him; his head thudded against a yellow tulip printed in the florid carpet.

"Yuh wont fight me, so I'll kill yuh without," the castaway muttered as he raised his knife over the prostrate body. "Yuh—yuh—skunk."

The Captain shook the shriveled castaway from him as an arising beast shakes dew from his hairy sides. The Oriental

cook, his eyes the blinkingly solemn eyes of an owl, pattered in to see the mariner roll to his feet, seize the steel, and toss it, twistingly ablaze with the sun, into the river.

"Git up," he grunted to the castaway. The shanty-boatman arose morosely.

"If yuh want to take my boat the way I told yuh, yuh can stay in this cabin till we git to Natchez. If yuh don't, yuh can go right now. If yuh want to work with the crew, yuh can—I'm short-handed, an' I'll pay yuh. But no more feud fightin'. The minute yuh go to startin' it, I'll tie yuh up with ropes like a crazy man. That's what yuh are. Blood crazy!" The sternness of his voice softened into amiability. "Don't be a fool. Forgit. Let's yuh an' me be friends. Have a chaw of terbaccer."

The castaway bit off a fibrous chunk of the jagged oblong offered him, chewed in moody meditation—then spat it in the Captain's face.

"Git out of here with yer dam Chink," he muttered.

The mariner's tingling hand darted to his revolver, rested a moment, and flapped wearily to his gray-checked trousers. "I'm gittin' bad as yuh are," he muttered. The door closed behind him.

TOWARD evening, as the *Vevay Queen* was bobbing past the smooth hills bulwarking in smoky green the Kentucky shore, the Captain had begun to descend the narrow staircase leading from the pilot-house to the deck, when a sudden lurch of the boat threw him heavily against the white railing. It crackled splittingsly. "Give her a good overhaulin' when we git to N' Orleans," he mumbled as he stooped to examine the woodwork. "She's gittin' old in places, I guess." A stunted figure, clad in a suit whose drooping trousers dragged the deck, shuffled up the stairs.

"Well?" grunted the navigator.

"Still willin' fur me to work?"

"Yep."

"What yuh want me to do?"

"Almost anything, I guess. Go see Red Plummer. He's the mate. I'm glad yuh're getting sensible."

Two hours later the shanty-boatman's scowling dexterity in coiling the ropes that moored the boat for the night at the muddy hamlet of Bear Creek won the Captain's massive admiration. "Yuh're a good riverman, Ruby. I aint seen many better. Where did yuh learn it?"

The castaway gave an inert grunt. "Ought to be good riverman. Mate an' pilot on the *Boone Belle* four years."

In the azure brilliance of the morning, when the boat halted at the microscopic wharf of the microscopic village of Rabbit Leg to take on board three wagonloads of hay from a signaling farmer, the skipper again lauded the derelict's sullen expertness. He stood on the deck, supervising the hoisting of the yellow bales onto the straw-fragrant bow, and had signalled the cub pilot to proceed down the scintillant stream, when the farmer lumbered from behind the clayey wagons, frantically wind-milling with his overalled arms.

"Hey! Steamboat!" he bellowed. "Aint you all takin' passengers?"

"All right!" barked the Captain. "Make fast!" he snapped to the crew.

A line curled from the castaway's warped fingers, whipped about the Captain's ankle and sinuously encompassed a post on the cobbled wharf. The skipper glanced quickly at his feet; his bronzed visage twitched imperceptibly. He leaped. For inland mariners have heard too often the thudded stumping of wooden legs upon the decks, not to know the power of an entangling, tightening rope. The loop did not clear his wide boot; he fell forward, the hempen anklet contracting silently as the vessel in a slow, rippling circle swung outward.

"Git an ax," he grunted.

A stevedore darted below in panic-struck obedience. The navigator's hands seized the taut cable, and his arms, great human capstans, strained titanically but vainly to draw the lumbering *Vevay Queen* closer to shore. Another rope lay near him, fast to a cleat. Quickly he lifted it; quickly he aimed at another low mooring post imbedded in the stony wharf. It caught; the outward drift of the boat was jerkily arrested; slowly with the new pressure it swung inward; the line circling the Captain's ankle became limp.

He withdrew a swollen foot from the black boot as the stevedore ran forward bearing the ax. "Don't need it," he rumbled. He turned to the shanty-boatman. "Yuh needn't work on the crew no more. I don't want no more—accidents."

The castaway sullenly hitched his lagging trousers. "I aint sayin' it was a accident, yuh—yuh—skunk."

The skipper's fists clenched; his face writhed passionately; then, to the stupefied

amazement of the crew, they saw his vast body tremble, and the knotted fists bloodlessly unclose.

"Git the hay down in the hold," he ordered miserably, and holding one boot in his hand, limped wearily up to the pilot-house.

The crew's astonishment speedily resolved into excited conjecture. "Dey's somethin' wrong, ah tells you," murmured Buffalo, the blackly fat cook's helper, as he and his Oriental master sat peeling potatoes in the steaming kitchen. "De Capt'n aint lettin' dat little fellow call him names fur nothin'. He knows somethin' 'bout de Capt'n; dat's what it is. He knows de Capt'n a 'scaped convict or somethin', an' de Capt'n's afraid if he teches him, de little fellow'll tell, an' he'll have to go back to jail. Ah seen a movin' picture like dat down in Saint Looney."

"Peel um potatoes," grumbled the Oriental. "Buffalo too much talk."

TWO nights later, when the *Vevay Queen* was splashingly dancing at her moonlit moorings and the exhausted crew were slumbering in readiness for another exhausting day, a door on the cabin deck was stealthily opened, and the dwarfed barefoot figure of the shanty-boatman emerged. In his hand was a short stick. His naked feet moved inaudibly along the carpeted corridor, pressed softly against the rubber treads of the stairway, shivered upon the cold iron of the boiler deck. Cautiously he made his way into the reeking and deserted boiler-room, climbed upon a greasy stool, and thrust the stick between the ceiling and a long metal arm which gleamed like a crescent moon over the dull red stars shining through the doors of the black fire-boxes. He was tightening the stick with noiseless taps of his scrawny palm, when the light tap of a finger on his leg caused him to start violently.

"Why um river fellah make *tap-tap*?"

"Dam Chink!" The derelict thrust a hand inside his shirt and withdrew a steel rod crudely filed into a point. Two bodies struck the iron floor ringingly. The noise of the struggle brought the skipper limping from his bed.

"Git up," he barked sleepily as he wrested knife from one, steel rod from the other, and pressed both their flat backs to the deck until their locked grips ruptured. "What's the matter, Kung?"

"River fellah um make *tap-tap*, 'bove boiler. Think um make bad, Cap'n."

The yawning mate, the aggrieved watch, the mute specters of gray-underwashed deckhands, roused by the disturbance, stumbled in and watched torpidly while the Captain, restoring the overturned stool to its legs, mounted upon it to search above the shadowy boilers and the silvery crescent of steel. He climbed down, the fragment of wood tense in his fingers.

"Why did yuh put that stick over the safety valve?"

The deckhands muttered, with awakening, ominous excitement.

The castaway ceased rubbing a bruised, bony arm. "Yuh know why. Yuh aint no need to ask."

"I don't know why, unless yuh're plumb crazy. If yuh was tryin' to blow up the boat, yuh'd 'a' blowed up yerself too."

"Yuh smashed up my boat: I smash up yuh's. Done it too, if it hadn't been fur yer dam Chink."

The grimy-clad form of the reserve fireman hurtled forward. "Come on, boys!" he roared electrically to the gray circle of stevedores at the doorway. "There's plenty of rope outside, an' plenty of us to pull! He'll look pretty hangin' from a smokestack!"

The skipper thrust him back. "There'll be no lynchin' on my boat," he grunted. "Yuh can git some rope, but yuh'll use 'em for tyin'."

The derelict gazed sardonically as the fireman vanished behind the glowering spectators. "I swore in the mountains to git yuh," he mumbled. "An' I will git yuh, ropes or no ropes. Yuh—yuh—skunk what wont fight."

GREAT veins swelled purple in the Captain's nightgowned throat. "All right," he said with gloomy suddenness. "I'll fight yuh. I guess there aint no other way."

The Oriental trudged forward, clutching a knife on whose carved ivory handle two fat, placid Chinamen were catching fat and placid fish. "Take um, Cap'n. Um good luck."

The mariner's hand closed upon it. He turned to the shanty-boatman. "I throwed yer knife in the river," he mumbled slowly. "Where'd yuh find that a-layin' on the floor?"

"Made it from a piece of iron I seen in the engine-room."

"Got another?"

"Nope."

"Git it."

The sweaty circle of onlookers flattened against the sooty walls. The gladiators, one a tawny giant, the other a sallow dwarf, swayed upon their tiptoes, crouched, sprang. The derelict crumpled to the rusty floor; the Captain's gigantic knee crushed the dwarfish chest. The thick veins of his neck were again a throbbing, fiery purple; he lifted the blade to sink it into the heaving breast. The throbbing purple became a quivering gray as a shudder racked his mountainous frame; the knife clanged to the metal plates at the castaway's side.

Giddily the navigator arose. "I can't do it," he pronounced shakily as he swept his hand over his white forehead. "He's blood-crazy. Tie him up an' take him to his cabin." Mechanically he brushed the soot marking the knee from his disheveled nightgown, and dazedly hurried outside, leaving a sooty crew to execute his command dazedly.

The Chinaman replaced the knife in a hidden sheath at his waist.

"Why didn't de Capt'n kill 'im, I asks you? Why?" grumbled the glistening Buffalo, as the two plodded to their bunks in the kitchen. "'Cause he's a 'scaped convict or somethin', dat's why. It was plain wrote all over his face when he throwed down de knife. Aint ah speakin' de truth?"

"Kung um not throw down knife," returned the Oriental solemnly.

LATE next morning the skipper stalked into the cabin where the castaway, shackled to the bed, sat glumly regarding a yellow-striped bumblebee buzzingly trying to effect an entrance through the screen of the open window.

"Kung says yuh wanted to see me," snapped the mariner. "What yuh wantin'?"

"I want to know what yuh're figgerin' on doin'."

"I aint a-figgerin'. I made up my mind. Yuh'll stay like yuh are till we git to Natchez. I'll give yuh a new shanty an' twenty-five dollars. Then yuh'll git. An' git for good!"

"Why didn't yuh kill me when yuh had the chance?"

Melancholy touched the sternness of the navigator's face. He winced. "I told yuh I hates killin'."

The shanty-boatman flicked the screen

with a finger of his corded hand, and moodily watched the bee disappear in radiant flight. "Yuh should 'a' done it. I owe yuh somethin' now, an' I don't want to owe no man nothin'."

"What yuh wantin' me to do?"

"I want yuh to let me work on the crew ag'in."

"An let yuh try to blow up the boat? Nope. I can't trust yuh."

"I aint a-askin' to be trusted. Yuh didn't kill me when yuh had the chancet, an' I tell yuh I aint goin' to owe no man nothin'. I want to work without gittin' paid fur it. All I want is the shanty. I aint wantin' yer twenty-five dollars. An' what I told yer about the pearl I ketched was a lie."

A grunt of sarcastic recognition came in answer. "I knowed it was a lie." Reflectively the Captain paced the floor of the narrow chamber. "But when yuh tell me it's a lie yerself, I guess yuh're bein' honest. . . . I'm a fool, maybe. But I'm shorthanded. I'll give yuh another chance." He loosed the captive's bonds. "When yuh git ready, yuh can siphon out that sand-barge we took on this mornin'. It's pretty leaky. . . . An' I'm goin' to pay yuh for what yuh do."

The castaway stretched numbly. "Don't want no pay."

THREE days the *Vevay Queen* chugged lazily down the golden Ohio, halting at each somnolent river hamlet, here to pick up a wagonload of tasseled corn, there to place on shore an affrightedly bellowing cow. On the evening of the fourth day, after the vessel had turned its bouncing stern to Cairo, and churned into the chocolate Mississippi, the navigator was descending the stairway leading from the wheel-house, when the youthful cub pilot caught sight of a log fantastically shadowed on the waves. He spun the wheel sharply. The boat veered, shook; the Captain was hurled violently against the very rail which by its cracking a week before had warned of the vessel's need of an overhauling. Again it warned—and collapsed as it warned.

The mariner's body toppled, crashed to the steel-edged deck below, and splashed into the lapping water. He sank under the star-mirrored surface, bobbed up again, and shouted to the wheel. The hoarse pounding of the engines rendered his cries futile. He tried to swim to the plunging hulk of the boat, but a paralyzing pain

shot through his thighs, and his herculean legs dragged helplessly beneath the ripples. With terrific strokes of his huge arms he fought the blackness—sank, and rose once more, to see the paddle-wheel sweeping sprayingly past. The brightness of the electric lamps showed him a figure leaning against the flashing gunnel of the stern.

"Help, Ruby!" he trumpeted. "Help!"

The dwarfed figure started, shielded his eyes with a gaunt wrist to peer into the starry obscurity, hesitated, then bolted to a circular life-preserver hanging from a post.

"Man overboard!" he bellowed shrilly, and dived into the river. He beat his way upstream, the life-preserver towing after him in the swells like the gigantic float of some gigantic fishing-line. With a churning of paddle-wheels the *Vevay Queen* halted; her searchlight showed to the shanty-boat-man the disappearing outline of her drowning owner. The derelict drove faster; he caught the vanishing body, and supporting it on the circle of cork, drifted and swam with the current until he touched the planks of the fantail, and with his burden was hauled aboard. Moodily he looked on until under the mate's ministrations the rescued navigator showed signs of returning life—then he funereally trudged off to his cabin.

A SUMMONS brought the shanty-boat-man shambling out and up the stairs to the pilot-house a brief time after a prodigiously bearded village doctor had come on board and departed. The Captain lay on a cot, the sheets uplifted by a plaster cast which encased his hips and long, outstretched legs. He extended a hand as the derelict entered. The visitor took it uneasily.

"Yuh saved my life, Ruby."

"Yep."

"Both my legs is bust. I'd be at the bottom of the river only fur yuh."

"Yuh didn't kill me when yuh had the chancet."

The skipper's face twinged in suppressed pain as a sudden pitch of the vessel jolted the lacerated bones. "I'm glad I trusted yuh. I aint got no doubts any more. I'll be laid up this way for a month, I reckon. The kid there at the wheel's afraid to steer by hisself. An' there aint nobody else on board can do it. Yuh told me yuh used to be a pilot. What do yuh say to runnin' the boat?"

The castaway shook his head stolidly. "Don't want to do it."

"Why not?"

"Jest 'cause."

"Yuh aint forgotten the river?"

"Who's a-sayin' I forgot the river?"

"Then why aint yuh wantin' to do it?"

"Jest 'cause, I tell yuh."

"'Cause, aint no reason. Yuh can use pilot's pay, can't yuh?"

The derelict thrust his skinny hands into his pockets and stared in frowning cogitation at the youth who stood by the clanking helm. "Git away from that wheel," he grunted. "Yuh don't know nuthin' about pilotin'."

Muttered rebellion followed somber dismay next morning when the crew beheld the former prisoner elevated to command. But the captain of a steamer is an autocrat who bids men obey or depart—and the crew did not depart; it was the castaway who swept the *Vevay Queen* past the muddy rafts of myriad shackled logs, the barges waddling with their loads of emerald-brilliant melons, the packets bristling white with filmy cotton, until after a week the vessel had scudded in the twilight by the mud-hidden harbor of Cane Valley, and the crew rejoiced that the journey's end of the withered pilot would be reached at Natchez on the morrow.

"I'll sure be sorry to lose yuh," drawled the skipper as he restlessly moved his head and gingerly shifted his body on the cramping cot in the pilot-house. "I've got so I hate to think about takin' on a new pilot tomorrow after yuh git yer new shanty."

The derelict expertly swung the craft from the path of a fleet of coal-barges appearing out of the settling darkness. "I know the river."

"Yuh know 'bout them bear-traps on the dam near Cadiz? We ought to be hittin' 'em pretty soon. They always keep 'em open 'bout this time of year. The *Isabelle Davies* got caught in 'em last summer an' went down with every man on her. Was them locks, an' dams, an' new-fangled things built when yuh was a-pilotin' before?"

"I know the river."

THE CAPTAIN stretched back on the pillow and closed his eyes with the lazy comfort of an invalid. Night smudged out the stately colonnades of trees edging the shores. The recumbent mariner raised awkwardly upon elbows until he could peer above the frame of the low window. "Ought to be gittin' kind of near them

traps, Ruby. . . . Yep. There's the two lights 'bout a mile down. See 'em?"

"I see 'em."

"Better steer closer to the channel, hadn't yuh?"

"I'm pilot, aint I?"

The skipper nodded in an apprehensive attempt at affability. "Sure yuh're pilot, Ruby. But maybe yuh don't know 'bout them bear-traps. All the river's pourin' through a space just big enough to pass two boats. Half a mile up, there aint no fightin' the current. Don't yuh feel it pullin' the wheel? Yuh're headin' right into it. Better head her out, hadn't yuh?"

THE wheel tinkled under the castaway's hand. Apathetically he watched as the craft veered in answer and began to drift with the tumbling eddies. "I'm headin' her where I'm wantin' to head her."

The Captain's apprehension stiffened into grimness. "Don't be a fool, Ruby. I trusted yuh the way yuh asked. Head her out before it's too late."

"I saved yer life, didn't I? That made us quits fur yer not killin' me when yuh had the chancet. I didn't want to be pilot. Yuh made me be."

Plaster crackled as the wounded mariner reared fragiley upward, and thrusting his body far beyond the limits of the bed, seized a spinning spoke. "Give me that wheel," he grunted. "Yuh aint goin' to kill fifteen men account of a pig that wasn't worth three dollars."

"It aint the pig; it's the principle." The derelict flung his gigantic but powerless antagonist against the wall with a violence that launched a hanging mirror shatteringly to the floor. Crying huskily for help, the skipper tried to struggle to his plaster-encased feet, the sputtering of the cast's fractured edges following his every movement, while the vessel quivered, swayed, leaped, in an accelerating dash past the close blackness of the shore. Once more he was hurled down; with one hand on his enemy's throbbing bosom, the other on the throbbing helm, the castaway kept the *Vevay Queen* in the hissing race-course.

And then—both the shanty-boatman's hands relaxed as he tottered and fell, in his back a knife on whose carven ivory handle two fat placid Chinamen were catching fat and placid fish.

"Dam Chink!" he grunted, and died.

GRAVELY the Oriental stood as the Captain's fingers gripped the wheel, to spin it fiercely, desperately; gravely he gazed as the vessel shuddered in defiance, then continued its scudding rush over the sighing river.

"She's gone, Kung," the mariner murmured quietly. "Tell the men to git the yawl."

Four brawny stevedores carried the stony form of their commander to the crimson boat on the boiler-deck. The yawl dropped into the water. For a moment it raced beside the towering hulk of the steamer as a colt might race with the mother horse it was deserting. The mate whirled a looped line toward the stump of a tree on the speeding bank. The loop caught; the yawl jerked to a halt, the water foaming hungrily over the red gunnels.

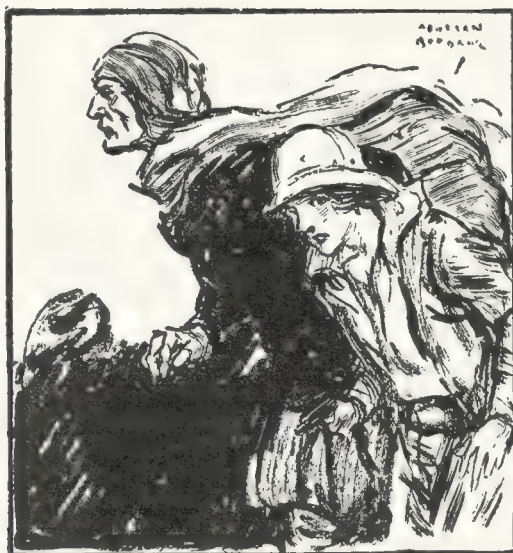
The crew splashed to shore. With awkward gentleness they laid their chief at the margin of a canebrake, where his eyes dismally followed the *Vevay Queen* curvetting down the long spillway, until she suddenly dropped from vision, ablaze with lights, the candles she bore to her own and one silent passenger's funeral.

"She was a good boat," murmured the skipper. "The boat I git for the insurance-money wont be like her."

A chilling mist blew up the river. The Oriental spread a tarpaulin on the matted ground, delicately moved the helpless mariner upon it, and covered him with the projecting folds. "Why not Cap'n um use knife self on river fellah? River fellah bad."

Bleakly the Captain watched the flimsy fingers of the mist touch and veil the shimmering water. He drew the tarpaulin tighter about his nightgowned shoulders. "It's 'ard to kill yer own brother, Kung," he said.

"What Is Written Is Written," a delightful novelette of the Madagascar coast by H. Bedford-Jones, will be a feature of our next issue. Be sure to read it.



The Four Red Circles

One of the most tensely exciting stories ever written by the distinguished author of "Madagascar Gold," "Cactus and Rattlers," and many other well-remembered Blue Book Magazine successes.

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

CORALIE SMITH, like a good many women in these degenerate days, knew too much for her own good, was proud of the fact, and was very attractive to the average man. Certainly Captain Maignan found her so, as she stood in all her trim, alert beauty at the gate of his lonely Saharan outpost and chaffed him about the four red circles. If he had been astonished by her appearance, he was stupefied and astounded by her departure, for Captain Maignan knew very little about her ability. Her mention of the circles, however, drew a swift protest from him.

"Mademoiselle, I beg of you!" he exclaimed in dismay. "Such words must not be heard by my men here, by your own men. Above all, you must not go to Bou Saffra, as the town is called on our maps. It is horribly unsafe, particularly just now—"

"Must not?" Coralie surveyed him with that dazzling smile of hers, thrice

dazzling by reason of her starry eyes and golden skin and sun-bleached red-gold hair. She had long since passed the stage of mere sunburn, and was richly tanned. "You forget, I am a seasoned explorer, and even speak some Touareg; moreover, I am interested in these four red circles which have caused so much consternation in your district. You promised to tell me what you know—all you know—about them. Please!"

Poor Maignan threw out his hands, helpless before such a woman. He swept his glance around the courtyard where the Senegalese of his detachment lounged, looked at the camels which Coralie's men were loading, wiped his brow, and began his recital.

"No white man has been to Bou Saffra—the Itessan tribe of Touareg live there, as you know, the oldest branch of the Touareg. The family uses four circles as a brand, for all their animals and livestock—"

Coralie laughed. "My dear Captain, I have written two monographs on the Egyptian and Tripolitan cattle-brands! And I know of the four-circle brand—the circles in a line. So, proceed."

"Yes, in a line," repeated Maignan. "Men have died, and there has been talk of these four red circles; it is a mystery, even to the manner of death. As you know, here in the A-ir district, the sultan is only a puppet. Each Touareg clan rules absolutely in its own region—"

"You have said that I know all this, and I do," said Coralie. "Pray come to the point. All the northern tribes are afraid of these four red circles, and there is some singular connection with Bou Saffra and the Itessan family brand. Just what do you know about the place?"

"The Itessan family possesses there a spot which all the Touareg believe to be holy ground, and they admit no visitors," said Maignan simply. "I know nothing more. Rumor tells how men die and babble about four red circles. That is all. The whole A-ir country is uneasy, and my five-and-twenty Senegalese are very unhappy men."

"You know nothing about a holy man there named Belkho el Bagdadi?"

"No," said Maignan, giving her a curious look. She smiled brightly, and gave him her hand.

"My dear Captain, I know more than you do, then. Come, I must leave—my camel is waiting. Thanks for your hospitality, for your kindness—"

"I beg you, wait here only a few days!" implored Maignan. "When that detachment of the camel-corps arrives, it will include many Touareg; I will go to Bou Saffra with you—"

"I am sorry; to delay is impossible," she returned. "*Au revoir*, dear monsieur!"

SHE turned to the gateway. The ten mehari, fine racing camels, were ready; that of Coralie was kneeling. She mounted in approved desert fashion, was neatly pitched into the saddle as the bubbling beast heaved, and waved her hand at Maignan.

He stood watching the line of beasts depart. Six of them bore supplies; Coralie Smith rode the seventh. The other three carried Abdul, a masked Touareg from Ahaggar, and two of his masked slaves. Under escort of Abdul, she was reasonably safe; he was well known to the French,

being a prominent noble, and a man of great authority here in A-ir. None the less, Captain Maignan sadly shook his head, for he had served through the local insurrection of 1917, and knew a few things.

"A beautiful creature, and I am sorry for her," he reflected. "I would give something to know why that woman is going to Bou Saffra! She has one reason in her heart, and announces another reason openly."

He sighed, as he looked out across the great empty plateau where the caravan route of the central Sahara had worn great tracks ten feet deep in the course of centuries—the immense desert uplands where his tiny tricolor waved above a mud fort.

"A woman always has a reason," he said; "yet she is always unreasonable. *Hélas!*"

"THERE is the place, *ya lella*," said Abdul, pointing. "This is your last chance to turn back; and as Allah liveth, I advise you to turn! These people are not Inghad, of the slave tribes. They are of the Imajeghan, the very noble clans, oldest and most secret of all our people, the Kel Tagilmus."

Thus the Touareg call themselves, from the veil or *tagilmus* which hides their fierce Berber faces from all eyes. Coralie Smith, however, appeared not to hear the warning; she gazed down the rocky slope at the valley beyond, her blue eyes bright and eager. Beside her the Touareg's eyes smote sharply from the slit of his dark blue veil and headcloth; his two slaves, veiled and armed like himself, followed his uneasy glances. One would have said that the white woman was less afraid than were these three riders of the secret tribe.

They looked across a narrow, stony valley set between sharp ridges of rock that formed high walls, abrupt on the opposite side, sloping more gently on this. Although the afternoon was advancing, shadow and sunlight were intensely black and white. Down below in the gorge was a pool of water, motionless as an azure mirror, with a few date-palms and acacias scattered about its verge and drainage; camels, mules and horses were in evidence. Beyond this pool was the village itself, stone-built, consisting of a large flat mosque and several dozen houses. Beside the mosque was a larger house than the others, to which Abdul pointed.

"There lives Belkho el Bagdadi, the

holy man, who came from Bagdad bringing to the Itessan family a new Tariq or law of salvation. So, at least, is the report."

"I thought you said he had been captured as a slave?" asked Coralie quietly.

"Allah alone knoweth all things," was the grave response, evasive enough.

"You are sure that the name might not have been—for instance, Belcombe?"

"Belkho is a Tamajegh name," said Abdul, and transliterated it into Arabic and French, as he had done twice before this. Then he glanced at the sun, which was westering. "Do you wish to proceed, or to turn back? I have brought you here as I promised; Allah alone knoweth what the event will be, either to you or to us. I can promise you nothing, for these people are not of my family."

Coralie smiled. "On!"

ABDUL silently led the way, her camel following his. As she let the beast pick its own trail down the winding, rocky slope, Coralie Smith looked down at the pool and village, and noted carefully the path; yet her thoughts were of the man who had vanished into the Sahara three years previously. The world had given Roger Belcombe up for dead; the army lists had posted Flight Commander Belcombe as missing; but Coralie Smith could never visualize the dead face of the man she loved, the man who had gone away into the empty air of the Sudan and vanished. To think this man dead was impossible.

So she came to Africa, spent long months learning the language, studying the people, and thereafter went on fruitless voyages into the desert. It was now a year since, in the bazaar at Khano, she had one day heard mention of Belkho el Bagdadi; she had been twelve months in tracing down that name, in reaching this spot in the almost unknown plateau of A-ir, the country of the Touareg. She knew only too well how bitter might be the truth, how unlikely it was that this holy man could be Roger Belcombe; but because Belcombe had served on the Bagdad front and knew his Moslems thoroughly, the clue could not be idly passed by.

Then had come Abdul the faithful, bringing her rumors of this saint. Mystery surrounded him; he dwelt afar in the desert, Allah had endowed him with powers of life and death; the jinn obeyed him, for

he had brought from Bagdad the mystic Seal of the great Suleiman, of three triangles interwoven in a star—and so forth. Nothing definite, but men died and babbled of four red circles, and bazaar gossip linked this with the Itessan family, and the holy saint of Bou Saffra. There was nothing definite, but the French were disquieted, and there was talk of an expedition to Bou Saffra, as the place was mapped, to properly overawe the Touareg before a new Mahdi should arise.

AS the ten mehari filed down to the valley floor, sunset was drawing near. The arrivals had been seen and were awaited; a dozen horses were pricking toward them, bearing blue-veiled riders whose lances and rifles glittered in the reddened light. There was no hurry, no confusion. The Itessan riders came forward calmly, others following in smaller groups, without shouting or powder-play. Abdul hastened his beast and presently addressed the Touareg in their own peculiar pre-Arab language. They listened to him, made no response, only wheeled their horses and left him to follow. He made a signal to Coralie Smith and rode on, the mehari trailing behind.

So they came into the village, and from the mosque ascended a quavering singsong voice, the call to sunset prayer. Coralie looked about at the unveiled women, the Touareg dismounting, the thronging children; then these were on their knees, Abdul and his two fellows joining in a short two-bow prayer and adding a *ratib* for their safe journey. Coralie did not dismount, for she never made any pretensions to being one of "the enlightened," and usually gained a corresponding respect from the men of the desert. She sat watching, her gaze flickering to the recessed windows of the house where lived the holy man from Bagdad; but those recesses were empty.

Now the prayer was over. Coralie's camel knelt, and she joined Abdul and his two men. The Touareg thronged about in silence, and she thought that Abdul seemed uneasy before this reception, before the lack of all response to his words. After a little time the door of the house of the saint was opened. From it came a tall man who uttered a few short, sharp words. Abdul replied, and was given a peremptory answer. He turned to Coralie, and spoke in French:

"I have told them that you came to see the man of Bagdad; they say he sleeps now and you must wait until morning. This is the chief of the village. I do not like the looks of all this, mademoiselle. If there is trouble, mount and ride while we hold them. There has been no threat; yet—"

He shrugged, and at a word from one of his own men, turned. The tall Itessan chief came forward to him and threw back his burnous, then placed something in the hand of the astonished Abdul. Coralie leaned forward to see what it was, and was amazed to behold an ordinary white paper envelope, upon which were scrawled four irregular circles in red, newly done.

The crowd suddenly fell back, leaving the new arrivals in a group. Abdul turned over the envelope, which appeared quite empty, with an air of perplexed dismay. Then, as though coming to a decision, he tore swiftly at one end of the paper, and peered into the empty envelope. It was empty, yes; and yet—

From Abdul broke a wild, sudden cry of unbearable anguish. He clapped both hands to his face, ripped away his veil and headcloth—the greatest shame of a Touareg man—and with a frightful scream plunged into a blind run. He ran only ten steps, then staggered and fell prostrate in the sand, and lay there motionless.

The crowd surged forward, without a word, and weapons slithered out. Abdul's two slaves tried to fight, but before they could pull trigger were shot down and knifed. Coralie Smith found herself held helpless in the grip of two men, and the tall chief came to her. In that same ominous silence he deliberately searched her, removed her pistol and belt, jerked the watch from her wrist. Then she was bound and shoved into the same house from which the chief had emerged—the house of Belkho el Bagdadi.

LIKE most real Touareg houses, this one was orientated and had two rooms; unlike most, it had also an upper room, attained by a ladder and trapdoor, situated above the room in which Coralie Smith lay bound upon a mat. And while she lay there waiting for the swift sun to plunge over the rim of the world and draw tropic night in his train, Coralie observed certain things. Her observation was singularly close and accurate.

Fortunately for herself, Coralie was no

heroine of fiction—somehow these heroines never observe things on the desert. They do not know that Arabs are keener trailers than any Mohawk; they fail in the knowledge of tremendous trifles, such as the ablutions and the eating-hand of an Arab; they are not alive, in a word, to the realistic side of their desert sojourn. Coralie was fully alive to it. She had seen Abdul die, and his two men murdered at her side, but she was not particularly overcome by horror or hysterics; one never is, in real life, unless the horror goes too far. However, she was keenly sensible of two things; first, her own position, and second, that of the man from Bagdad in the upper room. So, instead of bothering her head about theoretical problems such as that of the four red circles, she concentrated on actualities.

Shortly after her enforced sojourn began, she perceived the chief of the village and two of his men come into the house. These three carried her personal belongings, but none of the provisions or other luggage, and bore them up the ladder. Of the room above, she was unable to see anything. The three men came down again; the trapdoor closed behind them; and they stood conferring in low tones.

CORALIE watched them closely, finding something singular in their conversation.

Unable to watch their faces, unable to comprehend their language, which was not like the little northern Touareg she had picked up, Coralie had only their gestures on which to base an opinion; yet she formed one. This opinion was that these three men here stood in active hatred and fear of El Bagdadi up above. Then, presently, the three stood farther apart, drew back from one another. The chief took from beneath his burnous an envelope duplicating that given Abdul—an envelope on which were clearly marked the four red circles. A last word; then, with a sudden air of decision, the chief darted to the ladder and climbed it, thrust up the trapdoor with one hand, and with the other slid the envelope into the upper room. Then he descended, and after a careless glance at the captive woman, all three men left the house.

Coralie waited for a scream, the sound of a fall, from above. None came. She was far from comprehension of the whole matter; yet she had formed an opinion. This in itself was a distinct achievement.

TWILIGHT was gathering when two strapping Touareg women entered and came to her. One set down a bowl of *kouskousu* while the other untied her arms. When she spoke, they shook their heads and pointed to the bowl; so she began to eat mechanically, her nerves in suspense, her thoughts still busy with what had so recently transpired, as she waited for some sound of death from above. None came. When she had finished the bowl of food, the two women stooped over her to tie her wrists again. Coralie submitted meekly, but held her arms out in front, fists clenched, for the operation. The two women, evidently in high contempt, drew the lashings tight, left her ankles unbound as before, and departed. Darkness, swift night of the desert, was falling.

Coralie smiled slightly. In wandering to and fro across the face of the Sahara, she had picked up a thing or two not found in novels. For example, it is difficult to cast an efficient lashing about one's arms, short of dislocating them, when they are held out in front with rigid muscles, and her arms had by no means been dislocated.

Coralie fell to work with sharp teeth, and in ten minutes her hands were free. Her sole obvious weapon had been removed, but now she opened the trim khaki shirt below her burnous and bared her bosom to the darkness. Between her breasts, comfortably snug and safe from any but the most careful search, was fastened a tiny, ugly little automatic. She took the pistol from its holster, freed herself of the holster, and then searched her pockets. Nothing remained to her except a few loose French sulphur-matches and a packet of Algerian cigarettes.

For a space she sat in silence, reflecting. Why had that message of mysterious death been given the man in the upper room? From jealousy of his power and sanctity, no doubt; it had not been done by general consent of the tribe, certainly. The furtive movements of the village chief and his two men pretty well explained themselves.

SUDDENLY, in the silence, Coralie caught a slight sound from above—the shuffling tread of a foot. So, the man from Bagdad was not dead? She rose, drew her dark burnous tightly about her, went to the ladder. From the village outside came no sound; all was dark, silent, abandoned to the night. She set foot on the ladder

and started up. Scrutinizing the trapdoor above, she found no glimmer of light around its edges.

"Boldness is the only possible course," she reflected, and got out her matches. "Either that man is Roger—or he is not."

She ascended to the trap. There, listening, she once again heard the faint thud of a footstep, but was certain that the upper room was in darkness. Deliberately she put up one hand, slightly lifted the trapdoor, verified the darkness above; then, coming to the next rung of the ladder, she supported the door on her head and shoulders and scratched a match. She held up the sliver of blue flame into the room above.

She had a glimpse of a tall veiled Touareg figure, whirling about in alarm at the light. Then, under her very hand, at the edge of the opening, she saw the envelope with the four red circles.

"For the love of heaven put out that light!" cried the voice of Roger Belcombe.

"IT'S really you—really you!" murmured Belcombe in a low voice, as he held Coralie against him in the darkness. "I saw you arrive—gad, it's beyond belief! My dear, my dear, what are you doing here? Why did you come to this place?"

"To find you, of course," said the girl, and laughed softly. Then, in a few vivid words, she etched for him an outline of the past three years. Belcombe swore under his breath.

"Coralie, you're wonderful! But you don't know what—"

"Let me light that candle," she suggested. He exclaimed sharply, urgently.

"No, no! They must think I've been finished off. That rascally chief expects to find me dead in the morning—"

"Suppose you elucidate those four red circles, then," she said composedly, and touched his cheek in the darkness. Belcombe uttered a low, helpless groan.

"Three years ago! You know, dear, some of these Touareg had flooded over into the Sudan and were making trouble. I was sent to the force driving them back—was sent with a load of grenades and some cylinders of the new NX3 gas. Well, I crashed, and they got me. There was just one slim chance of getting out alive, and I took it. Told 'em that I had come from Bagdad for their benefit, got hold of the chief and outlined things; I was always up on their religion, you know. They

brought me here with my load, and I've been an emissary of murder for these devils. The chief wasn't fooled, but the others were; I managed to impose on them with parlor tricks, and one thing or another—"

"But the envelopes?" breathed Coralie. "There's one here, on the floor—"

Belcombe laughed. "Until recently I kept the thing secret, but the chief finally caught on to the hang of it. He took away the last cylinder of gas and managed to fix up his own. The thing is just an envelope, carefully made air-tight except for one opening; by this opening I inject gas from a cylinder, then seal it over. When the envelope is torn open by anyone, the escaping gas is nearly always deadly—just enough of it. Takes a nice hand to do it rightly, my dear; the four red circles, the tribal brand, is only part of the hocus-pocus. These Touareg don't rightly understand; they're superstitious. They've kept me a prisoner—I haven't been outside this room in two years—"

"You poor thing!" said Coralie, and snuggled against his cheek. She perceived that he was on the verge of breakdown; his voice and manner were very shaky. "Get your veil back on, now, and we'll be going. I have a pistol here."

"Impossible. There's always a guard watching the trails, and we'd never get by. Besides, the chief is devilish jealous of me and suspects that I'd make a break. I've tried it twice—"

"So much the better. We can get camels or horses at the pool, if the guard is not posted here in the village. What about those grenades? Have you any here?"

"Yes, all my stuff was brought along; but probably they're spoiled now."

CORALIE nodded to herself. She could understand perfectly that this man had been dispirited, broken down, rendered hopeless. With his wits he had fought for life, but the struggle had left him weakened; the long confinement had shattered his old fine spirit. So she thought, not knowing all the truth.

"You need me, evidently," she said calmly. "Get some of those grenades and come along. No talk, now! Is the village guarded?"

"No; the approaches to the upper plateau only—"

"Then we'll get horses, which are faster to get going than mehari. We'll ride over

or through the guard, and go. It's simple enough."

In the darkness, a slow laugh broke from Belcombe.

"Yes," he said bitterly, "it's very simple. So simple that I have been here considerably over two years.

"Never mind being nasty," she retorted. "Have you no faith?"

"What I had, I lost long since."

"Then you're a fool. Hurry with those grenades, now. Sure you have 'em?"

"Quite. At times I've contemplated pitching them out wholesale at the village—have come near to it, in fact, except that it would not have helped me to escape."

"Never mind being garrulous," she said curtly, trying to rouse and spur his spirit. "No more time to waste now. Come on."

Beneath her short speech, she was horribly anxious. She realized only too well that this was not the laughing, efficient Roger Belcombe she had known in earlier days. How this long captivity had sapped his spirit! She must be the man of the two this night. No doubt something of this same thought went leaping to the brain of Belcombe himself, for when he swung up the trap and she told him not to fumble on the ladder, he uttered a low groan.

"Coralie, ha' mercy on me! You don't know all—I'm far gone."

"You poor sweet thing!" For an instant she hugged his face against her breast in a swift, incredible access of motherliness. Then, pulling apart his veil, she kissed his lips twice.

"Now, down with you!"

HE went fumbling down the ladder, and presently she was down after him. They went together to the doorway that opened on the village—the house, like all Touareg dwellings, had three openings.

There was no sound, no light, save the soft tinkle of some stringed instrument drifting from some far house, and the flicker of a candle in one window. The night was cold, starry, clear, and Coralie knew that in an hour or two a glorious hunter's moon would be swinging up the sky to lade their road with peril. It could not be helped.

"Go ahead," she said softly, and Belcombe obeyed. Ah, that old, free, nervous stride of his! It was good to see. Clutching her pistol, the girl followed.

The open space before the houses, deep in soft sand, gave back no sound of their

steps. Coralie's swift glances found no leaping light, no fierce yell of discovery, no tumultuous figures piling forth in alarm; the escape was, apparently, ridiculously easy. Yet she was not deceived, for with her lingered those sad and hopeless words: "So simple, that I have been here considerably over two years—"

They sluff-sluffed through the looser untrampled sand toward the pool. This hung like a mirror of black bronze under the trees, shimmering back the starlight; animals loosely strung out, not frightened, but inspecting the arrivals incuriously. Belcombe turned and spoke softly in Arabic, not to startle the beasts.

"Mehari or horse?"

"Horses," said Coralie with decision. "We must get away instantly."

"Then they'll run us down tomorrow—" he objected.

"For tomorrow, trust God!"

"*W'Allah alim!*" he said, bitterly. "Only God knows!"

He sat down on the sand, drew out his knife; there was a sound of ripping cloth. His toughly woven veil and headcloth ran into strips. Bareheaded, he rose, and she saw his profile against the stars; she choked a little sob in her throat, but said nothing. He had changed.

IN five minutes Belcombe swung her up to the hollow of a sleek back, and got another beast for himself; holding the cloth-strip reins, tied about the jaws of the horses, they sent the beasts on. No trouble, no discovery, no alarm. It would have been incredible, had not Belcombe known only too well of the guard that was kept on the upper trail.

Coralie, who had carefully conned the descent to the valley floor, led the way up the sloping hillside opposite the village. She attempted no evasion, no concealment, but urged her beast straight on. She could not comprehend the danger. The fact that she had found Roger Belcombe, that he was riding here at her stirrup, filled her world with unrecking delight and happiness, mad exultation. No miracle was impossible, after this!

Then came rude awakening. A voice from above spat forth at them; dark shapes of men thronged the trail ahead. Belcombe made response, in that strange Berber tongue of these folk, and for a moment Coralie thought the path would clear. Then, in the starlight, they saw the

bare head of the man from Bagdad. One shrill yell clipped out, and a tall Touareg leaped up with a flash of steel.

Coralie pistoled him.

Yells resounded; the horses plunged; bullets whistled. From the road ahead of them vomited a blinding concussion—a grenade that Belcombe hurled. Coralie shot again and again; somehow she controlled her frantic horse, forced him ahead. The road was clear now, and in five minutes they were galloping side by side along the winding desert trail, where only patches of camel-scrub broke the sandy waste. Gone was the village, gone the valley and the tumult; gone was everything; here were only the desert, and peace, and the white stars.

"Feel better?" asked Coralie after a time.

"Wait for the moon," he responded grimly.

She laughed, and pointed to the blur of light on the horizon.

"It's coming!"

"Do you know where you're going? Which way headed?"

"*W'Allah alim*—only God knows!" she returned the ever-present Arab ejaculation at him. "Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful! Is not the fate of man written on his forehead?"

She was to remember those words later, and the deep, half-throttled groan which escaped the man; but as yet she scarcely remarked the sound.

THEY brought down the horses to the swift hand-gallop that could cover untiring miles—not the gallop of desert fiction, but the steady pacing of the real desert horse. The moon came up, a golden disk that imperceptibly became smaller in mounting, and donned a silvery sheen. An hour passed, and another.

"I brought a water-skin," said Belcombe. "May I have a cigarette, if you have one? It's against the custom of the Touareg to smoke—especially a holy man."

They drew up together and plodded along in a walk, smoking, taking a gulp of water from the skin about Belcombe's waist. She blessed his forethought in bringing it.

"With this moon, they'll be on the trail now," said Belcombe. "Those devils can track, I can tell you! Follow a spoor at a gallop."

"*W'Allah alim!*" said she, and laughed.

It was only half an hour later that her horse put foot in hole and plunged down with a broken leg.

CAPTAIN MAIGNAN, whose Bourbon blood ran still gallantly in sun-dried veins, lighted a cigarette and listened to the report of his scouts, sitting his gaunt mehari with easy grace. The two score men behind him, half of them Touareg, all of them members of the camel-corps which scoured the desert for France, waited immobile, high-strung. The scouts delivered a brief report.

"The firing came from a gully a mile to the left. We could see nothing, for the wadi was a deep one. The rifles, by the after-echo, are Mausers."

Maignan called up his stalwart, bronzed noncoms and commanded:

"Spread out. Surround. Advance."

A ripple of excitement passed through the waiting men. Mausers meant Itessan Touareg; these orders meant fight—they were free to fight, in their own fashion!

Sometimes the French are very wise.

The spindle-legged beasts stalked over the daybreak sands, ungainly, awkward, yet eating up the desert as only blooded mehari can. The swaying riders, half in Touareg veils, half in uniforms, spread out in a great crescent. The morning sunlight struck down at them blindingly, insufferably, intolerantly.

"Y'Allah!"

The yell shrilled up, was repeated, the great beasts hurtled forward at redoubled speed, swinging at the spot indicated by the scouts. From the wadi ahead scrambled some veiled figures on foot, then some plunging mehari, then a horse or two. A rifle spoke faintly; a rippling crash broke the morning as a volley thundered. With one wild, fierce yell the riders were into the wadi, plunging across it, firing after those who fled before them. The rifles ripped and crackled, then grew fainter as the mehari mounted the farther bank and raced on. The scream of a dying man died off in a gulp of agony.

Maignan, left alone on the scene, slipped from his saddle and ran forward. Among a cluster of boulders, behind a dead horse, he saw the figure of Coralie Smith, in her hand a grenade. She lowered it to the sand

and stood smiling at him, bareheaded, the morning sunlight wiping weariness and pallor from her face.

"Thank the good God, mademoiselle!" he cried out, overjoyed, kissing her hand repeatedly. "I was afraid—afraid! When the detachment came, I brought them along at once. If you had only waited a few hours—"

"If I had waited those few hours," said Coralie, "my errand would have failed."

MAIGNAN started, glanced around. Behind the dead horse, in the shadow of a boulder, he saw the figure of a man, one arm ripped naked and rudely bandaged. Now this man moved, struggled, opened his eyes and sat up.

"Who is he?" demanded Captain Maignan, meeting vivid gray eyes and starting in surprise.

"Flight Commander Roger Bel—"

A sudden exclamation burst from Maignan, checked the words on the girl's lips. She too turned to look at Belcombe, who was rising. He came erect, holding on to the boulder, smiling bitterly at them. The French officer swallowed hard, then saluted.

"Monsieur," he stammered, "Monsieur—"

Coralie was staring, astounded and horrified. It was her first sight of Roger since he had fallen to a Touareg bullet at the dawn. She had held them off, had been too busy with her automatic and the grenades to do more than hastily bandage his arm and leave him. Now her eyes widened.

Across his forehead were branded four small red circles in a line—the brand of the Itessan clan.

"You see it, eh?" Belcombe spoke slowly. "They put their accursed brand on me. You'd better go on, Coralie—leave me here. I'm a branded man."

She darted forward as he swayed, caught him, held his cheek against her own.

"You darling!" she cried, tears dimming her eyes. Captain Maignan, being a gallant man, turned his back, took out a cigarette, worked his flint-and-steel lighter for a spark.

"A woman always has a reason," he said to himself, rather mournfully. "I knew it."

H. Bedford-Jones will contribute "What Is Written Is Written," a typically swift-moving and especially picturesque novelette of adventure off the Madagascar coast, to our next, the December, issue. Don't miss it.



Raw Men

Self-preservation is not the first law of Nature, according to Mr. Pierce, who knows the Arctic at first hand and who offers this fine story in support of his contention.

By FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE

THE blue-eyed Swede spoke briefly in dialect to the greasy Eskimo. The latter peered ahead where the inexorable drift of the ice-pack was slowly wiping out the blue lead. The trading schooner was drab, ice-battered and unromantic, but her holds carried a fortune in furs. The shore was dangerously close, piled high with shattered bergs where the pack had grounded. Little short of a granite mountain could withstand the grinding pressure of the pack, and even granite had been scoured away so that in summer the cliffs were overhanging the sea in spots. The man-made thing of planks, cordage and paint was less than an eggshell when pitted against the flocs; and so the Eskimo considered many things before he spoke—then he grunted in dialect. He showed no fear, nor did the Swede who peered from his frosted parka hood and gripped the spokes of the wheel with mittened hands.

All others were below except one. He seemed detached from the scheme of things. He neither gave orders nor obeyed them, but stood forward, with feet apart—a big,

handsome man with more than a trace of character and refinement in his face. He cursed, not the flocs nor the sluggish progress of the schooner, but his father. His eyes blazed with the fires of resentment in the same fury of three months ago. The last words of his father were still ringing in his ears: "You're a selfish young pup. You've failed as a son; you're failing as a man. That means I've failed as a father. I'd rather have succeeded as a father than as a business man. I can't learn you nothing; maybe if you rub shoulders with life you'll learn something. I wanted to make your row easier to hoe than mine was. I made it easy, and that's my mistake. I tried to get under your skin, but never could make it, so we've hated each other at times. That's bad business for both father and son—to hate. It's the father's fault. He's failed some way. My lack of education—and what you once called 'a lack of appreciation of the finer things in life'—rubbed you the wrong way. I'm sorry, but I can't help it. . . . I gave you the wrong course; the craft was

wrecked. I'm trying to salvage enough from the wreckage to build a new vessel. . . . Bear a hand—wont you, son?"

Business men's associations, chambers of commerce, people who had done things, were glad to "learn something" from old Walton, but his son was not. Because he did not know there had been a wreck, he had not offered to lend a hand in his salvaging. Rather he regarded himself as a fine, trim craft steaming through the murky waters of his father's association. In a word he was something of a fool. There had been no scene, though the elder Walton could raise his voice loud enough when he was aroused. Dick Walton did not believe in lifting his voice in anger, and so his attitude had been dignified, well-bred silence.

The rest had been simple. He had been sent aboard Hanson's schooner with certain papers; Hanson had glanced through them, made a face, cursed inwardly and shoved off on the Arctic trading expedition. Dick had the choice of going along or jumping overboard. Hanson told him he did not care which course he followed.

WALTON ignored the danger on every side as he watched the schooner's progress. It was Hanson's business to get her through the floes and into open water. Walton reflected bitterly instead of lending a hand. "Crazy ideas, the old man has. What can a Swede with washed-out blue eyes, or a filthy, greasy Eskimo, teach a college-bred gentleman? They are of the old man's school; mine is different. We show the stamp of our respective schools." He was silent a moment, regarding the Swede and Eskimo. "Wonder how Mother ever came to marry the old man? She has refinement, background, everything, while Father—all right enough in a rough-and-tumble brawl, but—"

A sudden shock threw Walton to the deck. The schooner's bow leaped upward with a terrible grinding of ice against the armor of iron. Shattered bergs spumed up from the boiling sea as the schooner hurdled the barrier into the lead beyond. The engines stopped racing; once more the craft forged ahead.

"Consider," he said to himself, "the Eskimo. He is greasy, filthy, drinks ripe seal-oil—and I have seen him eat clams from the stomach of a walrus. His code crushes the weak; self-preservation is the first law of nature, but it is ten thousand

years removed from mine. He should be civilized and no mistake, but the fact remains he is a savage. What can he teach me? Nothing, unless I wish to drink seal-oil.

"Consider that Hanson! Colorless, silent, a bohunk from which an educated man can learn nothing, unless he wishes to sail a schooner or scrub decks."

One by one he considered the men with whom he had rubbed shoulders the past few months. Queer creatures, all—even the little old Dutchman who spent his life in the engine-room, where the air was always blue and foul from burning oil. The engines seemed eternally on the verge of falling apart, but by merely a laying-on of hands, old Schwartz always contrived to make them respond in the pinch. Of course if one wished to become an engineer—

Walton never entered the engine-room. It was too dirty, greasy and practical. The Eskimo spent hours there. Below were stowed baled furs now pleasing neither to nostrils or eyes, but which eventually were to know the rarest of perfumes and grace the shoulders of soft and lovely women. Walton groped about mentally seeking a lesson in transition, some comparison between raw furs and raw men. There was none. The furs could rise to great heights. They began on the backs of slinking wild creatures, and ended with God's greatest creation—woman. But the men were plodders, born to their lot, wresting from life whatever they could with bare hands, never to rise above themselves. It was unfortunate, but it was life.

Left to his reflections, Walton might have plucked from the cold Arctic air a line of philosophy that would have gone down in history as a classic. He was groping for it, when the greatest crash of all again sent him to the deck. The schooner trembled and crumpled from the mortal blow.

Walton fought and clawed his way from the wreckage to the floe. There were men below in the fo'c'stle, but they died silently. The blue-eyed Swede burst from the wheel-house and tore the covering from the narrow, squarish opening leading down to the engine-room. Old Schwartz was down there with his rheumatism, stiff-legged, unable to climb a ladder. A bit of blue haze came from below as the Swede disappeared; the screaming of the splintering schooner was like some living thing dying in agony. The greasy silken cap worn by the engineer protruded just above the hatch an

instant as if he were being lifted from below, then disappeared. No cry came from the hatch as the craft went under—just a final puff of blue smoke. The old Dutchman and the colorless Swede died in silence—men of the sea.

Shattered bits of wood amid shattered ice was all that remained of the schooner. The food, shelter and warmth that had been Walton's a few minutes before, had vanished: he stood on the ice unarmed, without food. Strange words came from behind him, startling him into the realization that he was not alone. The greasy Eskimo stood there, muttering in dialect. His words, "Men die and you live," meant nothing to Walton, but the glitter in the native's dark eyes placed him on the defensive. Then he laughed at his fears as the Eskimo's thin frame was racked with a cough. No danger there; if they reverted to the primitive he could tear the miserable wretch apart. Again the Eskimo repeated: "Men die and you live."

At the native's feet lay a section of walrus-skin, sufficient to wrap one man warmly. In his arms he held a skin filled with seal-oil—rancid stuff that would sicken a white man, though an Eskimo could live on it for a time. An ivory-headed spear was slung across his shoulders, and somewhere beneath his parka he carried a knife. Against this was Walton's pocketknife and his youth. Which would survive? Walton knew the answer: neither! But one would go like a savage, and the other would go like a civilized man. He resolved he would remain true to his teachings, his code, and not become a beastly savage.

THE Eskimo wasted no time in sorrowful reflection, but started over the ice, hugging the sealskin bag to his breast, dragging the walrus-hide behind him. Dick followed. In the past few minutes he had experienced a change. He had seen raw men rise to great heights of courage, and die in silent bravery. The colorless Swede could have saved himself, throttled the Eskimo with his bare hands and taken the skin of oil, the walrus-hide and the spear, and with them food, warmth and protection. With the spear or without it, he could have beaten Walton to his knees, for he was a physical giant. Instead, he had given his life for another; and greater heights no man can attain. Before him Walton bowed in humble silence.

In the slow progress over the floe, Wal-

ton again reflected on the different codes of the two survivors. The code of Dick Walton protected and cared for the aged. The primal code of the Eskimo was self-preservation—the first law of Nature. Like the majority of civilized people, Walton did not know of the strange code more ancient than that of self-preservation.

Alone, Walton would have fought his way to the ice-armored shore. The Eskimo ignored it and crossed the floe. As aboard the schooner, he considered many things—then leaped to a small berg. Unconsciously Walton found himself considering the skin of seal-oil, and wondering if he could drink it. Of course the native possessed it, along with the ivory-headed spear and walrus-hide, but he was aged and weak, while Walton was young and strong. Age must sleep sometime. Walton leaped to the berg. Neither man spoke.

The berg floated alone in the blue lead, fringed by floes on three sides. Hour after hour, the strange pair huddled in the scant protection of a small ice-hummock while the berg drifted. The Eskimo drew the walrus-hide about him to break the wind seeking access to his age-weary limbs. The spear lay on the ice in front of him within reach. He continued to ignore the white man; yet it was apparent he tried to read his thoughts. Walton found some solace in his pipe. His tobacco-pouch was nearly full; the matchbox had been refilled that morning. Hours dragged slowly, but darkness came too soon.

Walton had read that men freeze to death without realizing what is taking place, but he found the cold aroused him even when he dozed. Then he would leap to his feet and stamp about until warmth was restored. He was desperately hungry, but not hungry enough to drink seal-oil. In any event, when starvation drove him to the point of drinking the nauseous stuff, the Eskimo would have finished the last of it.

DAY came, sunless. The sky was overcast with the dreary gray of a casket. The native stirred slightly and leaped to his feet. The calculation he had made the day before was correct; the berg had become a part of another floe, the vastness of which the eye could not measure.

The Eskimo squirmed cautiously to the highest point in the immediate vicinity, then as cautiously returned, his eyes gleaming, the spear gripped tightly. He grunted

in dialect, and glanced about; then Walton understood. A polar bear had sensed their presence and was making his way to them, hunting instead of being hunted. The native gripped his spear tighter as the bear drew near. It was an ordeal a strong man would have shunned.

"Give me your knife; it's our only chance," cried Walton. "We've got to eat!"

Suspicion flashed into the dark eyes; he waved the white man aside. Walton picked up a block of ice. "I'll do what I can!" Again the native waved him back, then crawled toward the beast in an effort to gain some advantage in position. In a twinkling Walton had been thrust back into the ages ten thousand years. He watched the impending struggle entranced. The Eskimo steeled himself, gathered together the last ounce of strength in his withered frame and put it all in one vicious lunge of the spear.

The ivory head drove deep to a vital spot; blood gushed down the heavy white coat; the bear roared in pain. The spear was jerked from the Eskimo's hands as the brute turned, snarling, to attack. The native leaped backward and slipped swiftly down an icy slope to vanish on hands and knees. The bear pursued, leaving a red trail. Driven by hunger of the raw man to do what he could to bring down the raw food, Walton followed cautiously. Presently the native emerged, crawling, each movement a slow and painful effort. He had put his all into the single thrust; the effort had left him helpless, and he would have been an easy mark for the white man.

THE spear was in the dying bear, Walton recalled. "Thank God, I won't be driven to forget I'm civilized and prey on a miserable Eskimo—we've got bear-meat now!" He cried out aloud in utter relief. He had slipped fast during the past day—he was ready to eat raw meat from the kill, and hunger-pangs drove him to risk attack from the wounded bear. He made his way along the bloodstained trail to the spot where the beast had disappeared. Water lapped at the ice below him, water stained crimson. The bear was gone! Fate had denied him even raw meat, but—there yet remained a skin filled with seal-oil.

A struggle of the codes went on within him, and the code of raw men had an ally in hunger. He was slipping back with each passing hour; he knew it and fought

it. From time to time he glanced toward the withered native. The spear no longer lay on the ice in front of him, but he hugged the skin of oil even tighter to his breast. Walton caught himself plotting a route that would take him behind and above the Eskimo. Devils of his imagination whispered it would be easy; the native was unarmed save for a knife—a futile thing against a block of ice dropped from above. "He's run his race; the end is near," the voice of self-preservation whispered. "Your life is before you. You can do much for the world, for you are civilized and educated. Take his clothing for warmth, and his food for life. He is but a burden." It was as if a voice had spoken aloud, and Walton's protest came from set teeth. "Damn it—I'm civilized and I can't."

Several times during the day the Eskimo explored the ice in quest of a seal or bear. Each time he returned as silently as he had departed. He continued to ignore Walton. The white man had once referred to him as a "greasy, filthy Eskimo."

Toward night the tip of the great floe broke from the main body of ice. The Eskimo watched this without emotion, though it reduced their chances of finding game. Walton lighted his pipe, lest he go mad. In it, particularly in the fire in the bowl, he found solace. The Eskimo took his first sip from the seal-oil.

Self-preservation came to him in his dreams the third night, awakened him and remained. He was bitterly cold, needed additional clothing, while his whole being cried out for food. As before, self-preservation pointed the way. Walton muttered aloud: "I can't. I'm civilized. Mine's a different code. We care for our aged to the last. We don't strangle and rob them." Self-preservation jeered:

"Of what avail is your civilization now? Will the few dollars in your pocket buy food? Can your education kill a bear or seal and provide you with meat? The books you studied might furnish you warmth now, if you could burn them. You are no longer civilized; you are a raw man seeking food. The miserable wretch who holds the food is done for anyway; he sleeps, so why not— Ah! I knew it! At last you heed me."

As animals stalk their prey, so Walton crawled over the ice, nearer and nearer the figure huddled in the gloom. His code was behind him; he was about to kill, that

he might survive a few days and perhaps be saved. Schooners were coming out of the ice. It was while hurdling the last barrier, that their own craft had been crushed.

Now that he meant to kill, he found himself debating on the method. Would it be knife or hands? His pocketknife might do the work; still— The native's knife lay on the ice a few inches from the sleeping figure. Walton's heart pounded as he possessed himself of the weapon. Its blade was long and keen, and that settled the debate. "The knife," he whispered. "It's quicker. It'll be over with in an instant."

He would have to ration the oil over a period of days, and not drink it all tomorrow, for there would be many of them. In the half-light the blade seemed ghostly white. It fascinated Walton, then filled him with sudden repulsion. He dropped it, his hand stayed by the thought of blood. Blood, red, living, leaping from an animal, was one thing; but a man— His hands reached for the native's throat, hands strong, powerful, even after several days' fast. He had removed his mittens and now felt the bite of the frost; then he touched the fur of the Eskimo's parka hood. The throat was close now, and still the Eskimo slept. Walton's fingers curved; then his hands dropped swiftly to the shoulders.

"Good God, man, wake up and save us both! I'm—trying to remain a man!"

The native's eyes opened without fear; he spoke quietly in English, even kindly: "My son, I am awake!"

"You speak English!"

"When I wish. I cared for one of the first missionaries who came North many years ago, preaching of the white man and his God. He told us of his code, that cared for the old. We killed ours when they could no longer withstand the frost or follow the tribe. For a lifetime I have wondered about this code, and what would happen when a white man hungered. He taught me English, but he could not make a white man of me. My code is different. It is a better code, for the race.

"I have read that self-preservation is the first law of Nature. That is not the truth. There is a nobler code. Self-preservation is the second law of Nature. The first law of Nature is race-preservation. Through it humanity has survived, even my race. It governs the civilized races even today, for parents give their lives for their children. But my people are nearer to it than yours. When the food is low, it is the aged who

starve, that the worthy young may live and reproduce. Thus it has always been with my people; thus it always will be.

"During the long months on the schooner I watched you. You called me filthy, greasy. I wondered! You were the best educated man I had ever known. You spoke like the books I read from; yet you were not a man. Hanson and Schwartz were men. Civilization baffled me.

"Age should give forth wisdom, and leave curiosity to youth, who must ever learn by experience. Strange that I should be curious at my age, but I wondered which code would prevail, your code or the code of self-preservation. I watched your struggle! The outcome made little difference to me. I've run my race; the end is near. Tonight I knew you would come. I was afraid of your little pocketknife—the blade would not go deep enough; so I left my own. A knife-thrust is nothing. Thus my father and mother died, when he could no longer hunt, and she could no longer chew walrus-hide and soften it for garments. You came nearer and nearer, and through half-closed eyes I saw the struggle in your face, and never did I see greater. You dropped the knife, then reached for my throat—a withered column of skin and muscles that you could snap with one of your strong hands. I thought you had gone back, and waited. So this was your code, after all. . . . Then—you called."

WALTON nodded thoughtfully. "Yes, I won, or my code did—for a time."

"For all time. May I smoke your pipe? The missionary taught me that tobacco soothes." Walton filled and lighted his pipe, then handed it to the Eskimo. "Thanks, my son!"

Walton remained silent until the native returned the pipe. The bowl still glowed. Fire! That was what he craved next to food. Again he found solace in the glowing bowl. The Eskimo placed the skin of oil at Walton's feet. "You thought you would never come to it, but you will. You will even gnaw the skin itself." The walrus-hide came next; then the native slowly pulled off his parka.

Walton leaped to his feet. "Hold on!" he cried. "What are you thinking of?"

"We are different; each man's code prevails, my son!" replied the native. "Your race must go on, even as mine. You are young and—worthy."

"Hell!" Walton jerked the parka back on. "Let's stick it out together. And anyway, I won't be missed, and don't worry about my race not going on. There's over a hundred million of them left, and they'll get along somehow." Gently he pushed the old man to the ice and wrapped the walrus-hide about him. "Stay right there, old-timer. I'll take a sip of the oil, if you don't mind, though." He put the skin to his mouth and withdrew it abruptly. "Ugh! I can't do it!"

Walton lighted his pipe and propped himself against a convenient block of ice. The wind could not reach him; he would be comfortable until the cold got to him once more; then he'd have to leap about a bit. He closed his eyes and found strange peace and contentment, for he had measured up to the standard of his breed. More, he had at last found himself. He was too late, of course, and he wouldn't be missed much, except by the folks at home. "If there was only some way of getting word to the folks," he mused. "As it is, they'll always remember me as I was. They'll never know what happened—and Father will go down to his grave, never knowing that what he did was right. . . ." The pipe clattered to the ice, as Walton at last fell asleep.

The Eskimo reached forth and finished the pipe. Then he stood up and wrapped the walrus-skin about the sleeping white man. He shivered as he stripped off his parka and placed it with his mukluks on the ice. Presently his naked feet touched the ice; the frost-laden wind nipped at his wrinkled skin as he made his way to the floe's edge. Water, black and dreary, surged about the floe, waiting. "That the race may go on!" he whispered. "My code holds throughout time. God help—the lad."

WALTON was warm when he awakened. At first he could not understand. He must have slept long, because the sun was shining somewhere behind the southerly arc of that leaden sky. There was protest on his lips as he crawled from beneath the walrus-hide. "Now, I say—" he began; then he understood. The skin of seal-oil, the pitiful furry pile of parka and other garments, the stiff mukluks, told it all. Except for the single sip, the skin of oil had been untouched. The native had starved with him, then left him his all. Walton made his way to the water's edge, taking the trail trod by naked feet not many

hours ago. He looked thoughtfully at the water as if seeking means to convey that which was in his heart.

"'Greater love hath no man—'" he began, then dropped to his knees. The water lapped desolately at the floe as if to claim it and that which it held for all time; the breath of the Arctic nipped spitefully at the exposed parts of his face. "O God," he cried, "make me worthy of the sacrifice of a—Man!"

PROVISIONS aboard the trading schooner *Sealth* were low, but her skipper ignored that as he picked his way through narrow leads into the very jaws of the pack. It had been ten years since Madison had been rescued from an iceberg, and he had never forgotten it. Veterans of the Arctic shook their heads in doubt as they glanced from the icy fangs of the floes to the grim figure in the wheelhouse. "He was reckless at times, daring, but never had he seemed to cast discretion to the Arctic winds. Always he was lashed with the thought that if he went a mile farther into the ice, his quest might be successful—that if he turned back, he might leave fellow-humans to perish.

The man in the bow fending off smaller bergs with a pike-pole cursed, for his parka hood was frozen where the moisture from his breath had congealed. One mass larger than the others loomed up. Beyond that, man could not go, unless he was fitted with wings. And then—the man in the bow dropped the pole to the deck; forgotten was his frozen beard as he cried out and pointed dead ahead.

Ice was knocked off from the blocks and falls, and a boat gotten over the side. Madison stood in the stern, steering. Two held it to the ice while the skipper and two others leaped to the floe. Out in the lead the mate was already maneuvering the schooner about for the southerly flight. "Old Walton's kid," muttered Madison. "Looks about like I did when they found me. He'll live. Lucky thing the old man radioed me to take a look." He picked up a bit of gnawed skin that had once been fashioned to hold seal-oil. Except for the extra pair of mukluks, all clothing was on the man. The mukluks had been gnawed at the tops. "The ancient code!" reflected Madison.

"That the race may go on," whispered the rescued man painfully as in a dream.

Madison nodded.

Never has a mystery novel been worked out more ingeniously than this delightful story, and when you come to the unexpected conclusion you surely will join us in voting it one of the best ever written.



The Man in

(What Has Already Happened:)

THAT mysterious captain of crime known as the Colonel had organized theft as another man might organize a business; and after profiting hugely by a long series of robberies carried out by subordinates, had retired. One of his underlings, however, a dancer called Nadina, believed she "had something on" the Colonel, in the matter of a certain diamond-theft.

"You see," she said to an associate known as the Count, "the plan was to substitute some of the De Beers diamonds for some sample diamonds brought from South America by two young prospectors. Thus, of course, they got the blame for it. I did my part—but I kept back some of the South American stones—one or two are unique and could easily be proved never to have passed through De Beers' hands. With these diamonds in my possession, I have the whip hand of my esteemed chief. I want my price—and it will be a big one."

Shortly thereafter Nadina was found murdered in a vacant house which was being offered for rent near London. The only clue was furnished by the care-taker, who reported that a tall, clean-shaven young man in a brown suit had come to look over the house shortly after the lady had arrived on the same errand; he had re-

turned the keys to the care-taker a little later, saying the house didn't suit and that the lady had gone on ahead. . . .

And now the inimitable Anne Beddingfeld enters the story. Suddenly orphaned by the death of her father, a professor, Anne was staying with friends in London and looking for employment, when she chanced to witness a strange occurrence. Waiting on a subway platform, she noticed a small bearded man who glanced at her and then as his eyes went beyond her, seemed smitten with sudden terror. He took a step backward—off the platform, and was electrocuted by the third rail. The body was lifted to the platform; a man rushed forward claiming to be a physician and after a clumsy examination pronounced the shock-victim dead; then he hurried off, dropping as he left, a bit of paper on which was scrawled "1 7.1 22 Kilmorden Castle."

Anne longed for adventure. When she learned from the newspapers that in the dead man's pocket the police had found his name, Carton, and a permit to inspect the same house where the woman had been murdered, she went to Scotland Yard with her eyewitness information. Received coldly there, she went to a great newspaper proprietor and was offered a permanent



By
AGATHA
CHRISTIE

the Brown Suit

job if she could find the missing "Man in the Brown Suit."

Anne ran down many clues in her eager pursuit and as a result she presently found herself in Stateroom Seventeen aboard the ship *Kilmorden Castle*, bound for South Africa; the answer to the puzzle, she had reason to believe, was either aboard the *Kilmorden* or at her destination. Two other passengers had tried with perplexing persistence to obtain the same stateroom: a dubious-looking clergyman named Chichester, and Guy Pagett, secretary to Sir Eustace Pedler, M. P.—who was also aboard and who owned the house where Nadina had been murdered.

A third man of mystery was the distinguished-looking Colonel Race, a reputed secret-service agent; and a fourth, named Rayburn, had attached himself to Sir Eustace, claiming to have been sent as secretary and bodyguard by the Government. And he distinguished himself by staggering into Anne's stateroom one night with a stab-wound in his shoulder which he rudely declined to explain. Still—Anne liked him.

Anne confided her story to a fellow-passenger, the attractive Mrs. Blair; their interest centered on a certain roll of photographic films which had strangely been thrust into Mrs. Blair's cabin, for Anne re-

called finding a similar roll on a visit to the house of the murder. Might there be a message inside the roll? The two women opened it—and found a handful of diamonds.

They decided to keep the gems hidden for the present, for Anne realized they were somehow connected with the mystery of the Man in the Brown Suit. And here lay dilemma: she had become convinced that Rayburn was that much-sought individual—and she knew that she loved him.

Now began a strange series of attempts upon Anne's life: in the darkness a man tried to throw her overboard, but she was saved by Rayburn; at Capetown she was kidnaped and escaped through her own cleverness, and later an attempt was made to "plant" a stolen wallet upon her and have her arrested; finally, at Victoria Falls, she was decoyed to the brink at night, and in fleeing from her pursuer, felt herself falling over the cliff and lost consciousness. (*The story continues in detail:*)

CHAPTER XXV

I CAME to myself slowly and painfully. I was conscious of an aching head and a shooting pain down my left arm when I tried to move, and everything seemed

dreamlike and unreal. Nightmare visions floated before me. I felt myself falling—falling again. Once Harry Rayburn's face seemed to come to me out of the mist. Almost I imagined it real. Then it floated away again, mocking me. Once, I remember, some one put a cup to my lips and I drank. A black face grinned into mine—a devil's face, I thought it, and screamed out. Then dreams again—long troubled dreams in which I vainly sought Harry Rayburn to warn him—warn him. What of? I did not know myself. But there was some danger, some great danger, and I alone could save him. Then darkness again, merciful darkness, and real sleep.

I awoke at last, myself again. The long nightmare was over. I remembered perfectly everything that had happened, my hurried flight from the hotel to meet Harry, the man in the shadows, and that last terrible moment of falling.

By some miracle or other I had not been killed. I was bruised and aching, and very weak, but I was alive. But where was I? Moving my head with difficulty, I looked around me. I was in a small room with rough wooden walls. On them were hung skins of animals and various tusks of ivory. I was lying on a kind of rough couch, also covered with skins, and my left arm was bandaged up and felt stiff and uncomfortable. At first I thought I was alone, and then I saw a man's figure sitting between me and the light, his head turned toward the window. He was so still that he might have been carved out of wood. Something in the close-cropped black head was familiar to me, but I did not dare to let my imagination run astray. Suddenly he turned, and I caught my breath. It was Harry Rayburn!

He rose and came over to me.

"Feeling better?" he said a trifle awkwardly.

I could not answer. The tears were running down my face. I was weak still, but I held his hand in both of mine. If only I could die like this, while he stood there looking down on me with that new look in his eyes!

"Don't cry, Anne. Please don't cry. You're safe now. No one shall hurt you."

He went and fetched a cup and brought it to me.

"Drink some of this milk."

I drank obediently. He went on talking in a low, coaxing tone such as he might have used to a child.

"Don't ask any more questions now. Go to sleep again. You'll be stronger by and by. I'll go away if you like."

"No," I said urgently. "No, no."

"Then I'll stay."

HE brought a small stool over beside me and sat there. He laid his hand over mine; and, soothed and comforted, I dropped off to sleep once more.

It must have been evening then, but when I woke again, the sun was high in the heavens. I was alone in the hut, but as I stirred, an old native woman came running in. She was hideous as sin, but she grinned at me encouragingly. She brought me water in a basin and helped me wash my face and hands. Then she brought me a large bowl of soup, and I finished it, every drop! I asked her several questions, but she only grinned and nodded and chattered away in a guttural language.

Suddenly she stood up and drew back respectfully as Harry Rayburn entered. He gave her a nod of dismissal, and she went out, leaving us alone. He smiled at me.

"Really better today!"

"Yes, indeed, but very bewildered still. Where am I?"

"You're on a small island on the Zambezi, about four miles up from the Falls."

"Do—do my friends know I'm here?"

He shook his head.

"I must send word to them."

"That is as you like, of course; but if I were you, I should wait until you are a little stronger."

"Why? How long have I been here?"

His answer amazed me: "Just over a week."

"Oh!" I cried. "I must send word to Suzanne. She'll be terribly anxious."

"Who is Suzanne?"

"Mrs. Blair. I was with her and Sir Eustace and Colonel Race at the hotel—but you knew that, surely?"

He shook his head.

"I know nothing—except that I found you, caught in the fork of a tree, unconscious and with a badly wrenched arm."

"Where was the tree?"

"Overhanging the ravine. But for your clothes catching on the branches, you would infallibly have been dashed to pieces."

I shuddered. Then a thought struck me.

"You say you didn't know I was there. What about the note, then?"

"What note?"

"The note you sent me, asking me to meet you in the clearing."

He stared at me.

"I sent no note."

I felt myself flushing up to the roots of my hair. Fortunately, he did not seem to notice.

"How did you come to be on the spot in such a marvelous manner?" I asked, in as nonchalant a way as I could assume. "And what are you doing in this part of the world, anyway?"

"I live here," he said simply.

"On this island?"

"Yes; I came here after the war. Sometimes I take parties from the hotel out in my boat—but it costs me very little to live, and mostly I do as I please."

"You live here all alone?"

"I am not pining for society, I assure you," he replied coldly.

"I am sorry to have inflicted mine upon you," I retorted, "but I seem to have had very little say in the matter."

To my surprise, his eyes twinkled a little.

"None whatever. I slung you across my shoulder like a sack of coal and carried you to my boat—quite like a primitive man of the Stone Age."

"But for a different reason," I put in.

He flushed this time.

"But you haven't told me how you came to be wandering about so conveniently for me?" I said hastily, to cover his confusion.

"I couldn't sleep. I was restless—disturbed—had the feeling something was going to happen. In the end I took the boat and came ashore and tramped down toward the Falls. I was just at the head of the Palm Gully when I heard you scream."

"Why didn't you get help from the hotel instead of carting me all the way here?" I asked.

He flushed again.

"I suppose it seems an unpardonable liberty to you—but I don't think that even now you realize your danger. You think I should have informed your friends? Pretty friends, who allowed you to be decoyed out to death! No, I swore to myself that I'd take better care of you than anyone else could. Not a soul comes to this island. I got old Batani, whom I cured of a fever once, to come and look after you. She's loyal. She'll never say a word. I could keep you here for months, and no one would ever know."

How some words please one! "I could keep you here for months and no one would ever know!"

"You did quite right," I said quietly. "And I shall not send word to anyone. A day or so more of anxiety doesn't make much difference. It's not as though they were my own people. They're only acquaintances really—even Suzanne. And whoever wrote that note must have known—a great deal. It was not the work of an outsider."

I MANAGED to mention the note this time without blushing at all.

"If you would be guided by me—" he said, hesitating.

"I don't expect I shall be," I answered candidly. "But there's no harm in hearing."

He blinked a bit at that, and then continued:

"If I were you, I would stay quietly *perdue* here until you are quite strong again. Your enemies will believe you dead. They will hardly be surprised at not finding the body. It would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks and carried down with the torrent."

I shivered.

"Once you are completely restored to health, you can journey quietly on to Beira and get a boat to take you back to England."

"That would be very tame," I objected scornfully.

"There speaks a foolish schoolgirl."

"I'm not a foolish schoolgirl," I cried indignantly. "I'm a woman."

He looked at me with an expression I could not fathom, as I sat up flushed and excited.

"God help me, so you are!" he muttered, and went abruptly out.

MY recovery was rapid. The two injuries I had sustained were a knock on the head and a badly wrenched arm. The latter was the most serious, and to begin with, my rescuer had believed it to be actually broken. A careful examination, however, convinced him that it was not so, and although it was very painful, I was recovering the use of it quite quickly.

It was a strange time. We were cut off from the world, alone together as Adam and Eve might have been—but with what a difference! Old Batani hovered about, counting no more than a dog might have done. I insisted on doing the cooking, or

as much of it as I could manage with one arm. Harry was out a good part of the time, but we spent long hours together lying out in the shade of the palms, talking and discussing everything under high heaven, quarreling and making it up again.

The time was drawing near, I knew, when I should be well enough to leave, and I realized it with a heavy heart. One evening the crisis came. We had finished our simple meal and were sitting in the doorway of the hut. The sun was sinking.

Hairpins were necessities of life with which Harry had not been able to provide me; and my hair, straight and black, hung to my knees. I sat with my chin on my hands, lost in meditation. I felt rather than saw, Harry looking at me.

"You look like a witch, Anne," he said at last, and there was something in his voice that had never been there before.

HE reached out his hand and just touched my hair. I shivered. Suddenly he sprang up with an oath.

"You must leave here tomorrow—do you hear?" he cried. "I—I can't bear any more. I'm only a man, after all. You must go, Anne. You must. You're not a fool. You know yourself that this can't go on."

"I suppose not," I said slowly. "But—it's been happy, hasn't it?"

"Happy? It's been hell!"

"As bad as that?"

"What do you torment me for? Why are you mocking at me? Why do you say that—laughing into your hair?"

"I wasn't laughing. And I'm not mocking. If you want me to go, I'll go. But if you want me to stay—I'll stay."

"Not that!" he cried vehemently. "Not that. Don't tempt me, Anne. Do you realize what I am? A criminal twice over! A man hunted down. They know me here as Harry Parker—they think I've been away on a trek upcountry, but any day they may put two and two together, and then the blow will fall. You're so young, Anne, and so beautiful. All the world's before you—love, life, everything. Mine's behind me—scorched, spoiled, with a taste of bitter ashes."

"If you don't want me—"

"You know I want you. You know that I'd give my soul to pick you up in my arms and keep you here, hidden away from the world, forever and ever. And you're tempting me, Anne. But I'll save

you from yourself and from me. You shall go tonight. You shall go to Beira—"

"I'm not going to Beira," I interrupted.

"You are. You shall go to Beira if I have to take you there myself and throw you onto the boat. What do you think I'm made of? Do you think I'll wake up night after night, fearing they've got you? One can't go on counting on miracles happening. You must go back to England, Anne—and marry and be happy."

"With a steady man who'll give me a good home!"

"Better that than—utter disaster."

"And what of you?"

His face grew grim and set.

"I've got my work ready to hand. Don't ask what it is. You can guess, I dare say. But I'll tell you this: I'll clear my name, or die in the attempt, and I'll choke the life out of the damned scoundrel who did his best to murder you the other night."

"We must be fair," I said. "He didn't actually push me over."

"He'd no need to. His plan was cleverer than that. I went up to the path afterward. Everything looked all right, but by the marks on the ground I saw that the stones which outline the path had been taken up and put down again in a slightly different place. There are tall bushes growing just over the edge. He'd balanced the outside stones on them, so that you'd think you were still on the path when in reality you were stepping into nothingness. God help him if I lay my hands upon him!"

He paused a minute and then said, in a totally different tone:

"We've never spoken of these things, Anne, have we? But the time's come. I want you to hear the whole story."

"If it hurts you to go over the past, don't tell me," I said in a low voice.

"But I want you to know. I never thought I should speak of that part of my life to anyone, but—"

He was silent for a minute or two. The sun had set, and the velvety darkness of the African night was enveloping us.

"Some of it I know," I said gently.

"What do you know?"

"I know that your real name is Harry Lucas."

Still he hesitated—not looking at me, but staring straight out in front of him. I had no clue as to what was passing in his mind, but at last he jerked his head forward as though acquiescing in some unspoken decision of his own, and began his story.

CHAPTER XXVI

HARRY RAYBURN'S STORY

"YOU are right. My real name is Harry Lucas. My father was a retired soldier who came out to farm in Rhodesia. He died when I was in my second year at Cambridge."

"Were you fond of him?" I asked suddenly.

"I—don't know."

Then he flushed and went on with sudden vehemence:

"Why do I say that? I *did* love my father. We said bitter things to each other the last time I saw him, and we had many rows over my wildness and my debts, but I cared for the old man. I know how much now, when it's too late," he continued more quietly. "It was at Cambridge that I met the other fellow—"

"Young Eardsley?"

"Yes, young Eardsley. His father, as you know, was one of South Africa's most prominent men. We drifted together at once, my friend and I. We had our love of South Africa in common, and we both had a taste for the untrodden places of the world. After he left Cambridge, Eardsley had a final quarrel with his father. The old man had paid his debts twice, but refused to do so again. There was a bitter scene between them. Sir Laurence declared himself at the end of his patience—would do no more for his son. He must stand on his own legs for a while. The result was, as you know, that we two young men went off to South America together, prospecting for diamonds. I'm not going into that now, but we had a wonderful time out there. Hardships in plenty, you understand, but it was a good life—a hand-to-mouth scramble for existence far from the beaten track. And that's the place to know a friend! Well, as Colonel Race told you, our efforts were crowned with success. We found a second Kimberley in the heart of the British Guiana jungles. I can't tell you our elation. It wasn't so much the actual value in money of the find—you see, Eardsley was used to money, and he knew that when his father died he would be a millionaire; and Lucas had always been poor and was used to it. No, it was the sheer delight of discovery."

He paused, and then added, almost apologetically: "You don't mind my telling it this way, do you—as though I wasn't

in it at all. It seems like that now; when I look back and see those two boys, I almost forget that one of them was—Harry Rayburn."

"Tell it any way you like," I said, and he went on:

"We came to Kimberley—very cock-a-hoop over our find. We brought a magnificent selection of diamonds with us to submit to the experts. And then, in the hotel at Kimberley, we met her—"

I STIFFENED a little, and the hand that rested on the doorpost clenched itself involuntarily.

"Anita Grünberg—that was her name. She was an actress—quite young and very beautiful. She was South African born, but her mother was a Hungarian, I believe. There was some sort of mystery about her, and that, of course, heightened her attraction for two boys home from the wilds. She must have had an easy task. We both fell for her right away, and we both took it hard. It was the first shadow that had ever come between us—but even then, it didn't weaken our friendship. Each of us, I honestly believe, was willing to stand aside for the other to go in and win. But that wasn't her game. Sometimes, afterward, I wondered why it hadn't been, for Sir Laurence Eardsley's only son was quite a *partie*. But the truth of it was that she was married, to a sorter at De Beers', though nobody knew of it. She pretended enormous interest in our discovery, and we told her all about it, and even showed her the diamonds. Delilah—that's what she should have been called; and she played her part well!

"The De Beers robbery was discovered, and like a thunderclap the police came down upon us. They seized our diamonds. We only laughed at first—the whole thing was so absurd. And then the diamonds were produced in court—and without question they were the stones stolen from De Beers. Anita Grünberg had disappeared. She had effected the substitution neatly enough, and our story that these were not the stones originally in our possession was laughed to scorn.

"Sir Laurence Eardsley had enormous influence. He succeeded in getting the case dismissed—but it left two young men ruined and disgraced, to face the world with the stigma of *thief* attached to their name, and it pretty well broke the old fellow's heart. He had one bitter interview with his son

in which he heaped upon him every reproach imaginable. He had done what he could to save the family name, but from that day on, his son was his son no longer. He cast him off utterly. And the boy, like the proud young fool that he was, remained silent, disdaining to protest his innocence in the face of his father's disbelief. He came out furious from the interview—his friend was waiting for him. A week later war was declared. The two friends enlisted together. You know what happened. The best pal a man ever had was killed, partly through his own mad recklessness in rushing into unnecessary danger. He died with his name tarnished.

"I swear to you, Anne, that it was mainly on his account that I was so bitter against that woman. It had gone deeper with him than with me. I had been madly in love with her for the moment—I even think that I frightened her sometimes; but with him it was a quieter and deeper feeling. She had been the very center of his universe, and her betrayal of him tore up the very roots of his life."

HARRY paused. After a minute or two he went on:

"As you know, I was reported 'Missing, presumed killed.' I never troubled to correct the mistake. I took the name of Parker and came to this island, which I knew of old. At the beginning of the war I had had ambitious hopes of proving my innocence, but now all that spirit seemed dead. My pal was dead; neither he nor I had any living relations who would care. I was supposed to be dead too—let it remain at that! I led a peaceful existence here, neither happy nor unhappy—numbed of all feeling. I see now, though I did not realize it at the time, that that was partly the effect of the war.

"And then one day something occurred to wake me right up again. I was taking a party of people in my boat on a trip up the river, and I was standing at the landing-stage, helping them in, when one of the men uttered a startled exclamation. It focused my attention on him. He was a small, thin man with a beard, and he was staring at me for all he was worth as though I were a ghost. So powerful was his emotion that it awakened my curiosity. I made inquiries about him at the hotel and learned that his name was Carton, that he came from Kimberley, and that he was a diamond-sorter employed by De Beers.

In a minute all the old sense of wrong surged over me again. I left the island and went to Kimberley.

"I could find out little more about him, however. In the end I decided that I must force an interview. I took my revolver with me. In the brief glimpse I had had of him, I had realized that he was a physical coward. No sooner were we face to face than I recognized that he was afraid of me. I soon forced him to tell me all he knew. He had engineered part of the robbery, and Anita Grünberg was his wife. He had once caught sight of both of us when dining with her at the hotel, and having read that I was killed, my appearance in the flesh at the Falls had startled him badly. He and Anita had married quite young, but she had soon drifted away from him. She had got in with a bad lot, he told me—and it was then for the first time that I heard of 'the Colonel.' Carton himself had never been mixed up in anything except this one affair, so he solemnly assured me, and I was inclined to believe him. He was emphatically not of the stuff of which successful criminals are made.

"I still had the feeling that he was keeping back something. As a test, I threatened to shoot him there and then, declaring that I cared very little what became of me now. In a frenzy of terror he poured out a further story. It seems that Anita Grünberg did not quite trust the Colonel. While pretending to hand over to him the stones she had taken from the hotel, she kept back some in her own possession. Carton, with his technical knowledge, had advised her which to keep. If, at any time, these stones were produced, they were of such color and quality as to be readily identifiable, and the experts at De Beers' would admit at once that these stones had never passed through their hands. In this way, my story of a substitution would be supported, my name would be cleared, and suspicion would be diverted to the proper quarter. I gathered that, contrary to his usual practice, the Colonel himself had been concerned in this affair; therefore Anita felt satisfied that she had a real hold over him, should she need it. Carton now proposed that I should make a bargain with Anita Grünberg or Nädina, as she now called herself. For a sufficient sum of money, he thought that she would be willing to give up the diamonds and betray her former employer. He would cable to her immediately.

"I was still suspicious of Carton. He was a man whom it was easy enough to frighten, but who, in his fright, would tell so many lies that to sift the truth out from them would be no easy job. I went back to the hotel and waited. By the following evening I judged that he would have received the reply to his cable. I called round at his house and was told that Mr. Carton was away, but would be returning on the morrow. Instantly I became suspicious. In the nick of time I found out that he was in reality sailing for England on the *Kilmorden Castle*, which left Cape-town in two days' time. I had just time to journey down and catch the same boat.

"I had no intention of alarming Carton by revealing my presence on board. I had done a good deal of acting in my time at Cambridge, and it was comparatively easy for me to transform myself into a grave, bearded gentleman of middle age. I avoided Carton carefully, keeping to my own cabin as far as possible under the pretense of illness.

"I HAD no difficulty in trailing him when we got to London. He went straight to a hotel and did not go out until the following day. He left the hotel shortly before one o'clock. I was behind him. He went straight to a house-agent in Knightsbridge. There he asked for particulars of houses to let on the river.

"I was at the next table also inquiring about houses. Then suddenly I walked Anita Grünberg, Nadina—whatever you like to call her. Superb, insolent, and almost as beautiful as ever. How I hated her. There she was, the woman who had ruined my life—and who had also ruined a better life than mine. At that minute I could have put my hands round her neck and squeezed the life out of her inch by inch! Just for a minute or two I saw red. I hardly took in what the agent was saying. It was her voice that I heard next, high and clear, with an exaggerated foreign accent:

"The Mill House, Marlow. The property of Sir Eustace Pedler. That sounds as though it might suit me. At any rate, I will go and see it."

"The man wrote her an order, and she walked out again in her regal insolent manner. Not by word or a sign had she recognized Carton; yet I was sure that their meeting there was a preconceived plan. Then I started to jump to conclusions.

Not knowing that Sir Eustace was at Cannes, I thought that this house-hunting business was a mere pretext for meeting him in the Mill House. I knew that he had been in South Africa at the time of the robbery; and never having seen him, I immediately leaped to the conclusion that he himself was the mysterious Colonel of whom I had heard so much.

"I followed my two suspects along Knightsbridge. Nadina went into the Hyde Park Hotel. I quickened my pace and went in also. She walked straight into the restaurant, and I decided that I would not risk her recognizing me at the moment, but would continue to follow Carton. I was in great hopes that he was going to get the diamonds, and that by suddenly appearing and making myself known to him when he least expected it, I might startle the truth out of him. I followed him down into the tube station at Hyde Park Corner. He was standing by himself at the end of the platform. There was some girl standing near, but no one else. I decided that I would accost him then and there. You know what happened. In the sudden shock of seeing the man whom he imagined far away in South Africa, he lost his head and stepped back upon the line. He was always a coward.

"Under the pretext of being a doctor, I managed to search his pockets. There was a wallet with some notes in it, and one or two unimportant letters. There was a roll of films—which I must have dropped somewhere later; and there was a piece of paper with an appointment made on it for the 22nd on the *Kilmorden Castle*. In my haste to get away before anyone detained me, I dropped that also, but fortunately I remembered the figures.

"I hurried to the nearest cloak-room and hastily removed my make-up. I did not want to be laid by the heels for picking a dead man's pocket. Then I retraced my steps to the Hyde Park Hotel. Nadina was still having lunch. I needn't describe in detail how I followed her down to Marlow. She went into the house, and I spoke to the woman at the lodge, pretending that I was with her. Then I too went in."

He stopped. There was a tense silence.

"You will believe me, Anne, won't you? I swear before God that what I am going to say is true. I went into the house after her with something very like murder in my heart—and she was dead! I found her in the first floor room—God, it was horrible!

Dead—and I was not more than three minutes behind her. And there was no sign of anyone else in the house! Of course I realized at once the terrible position I was in. By one master-stroke the blackmailer had rid himself of the blackmailer, and at the same time had provided a victim to whom the crime would be ascribed. The hand of the Colonel was very plain. For the second time I was to be his victim. Fool that I had been, to walk into the trap so easily!

"I hardly know what I did next. I managed to go out of the place looking fairly normal, but I knew that it could not be long before the crime was discovered and a description of my appearance telegraphed all over the country.

"I lay low for some days, not daring to make a move. In the end, chance came to my aid. I overheard a conversation between two middle-aged gentlemen in the street, one of whom proved to be Sir Eustace Pedler. I at once conceived the idea of attaching myself to him as his secretary. The fragment of conversation I had overheard gave me my clue. I was now no longer so sure that Sir Eustace Pedler was the Colonel. His house might have been appointed as a rendezvous by accident, or for some obscure motive that I had not fathomed."

"DO you know," I interrupted, "that Guy Pagett was in Marlow at the date of the murder?"

"That settles it, then. I thought he was at Cannes with Sir Eustace."

"He was supposed to be in Florence—but he certainly never went *there*. I'm pretty certain he was really in Marlow, but of course I can't prove it."

"And to think I never suspected Pagett for a minute, until the night he tried to throw you overboard! The man's a marvelous actor."

"Yes, isn't he?"

"That explains why the Mill House was chosen. Pagett could probably get in and out of it unobserved. Of course—he made no objection to my accompanying Sir Eustace across in the boat. He didn't want me laid by the heels immediately. You see, evidently Nadina didn't bring the jewels with her to the rendezvous as they had counted on her doing. I fancy that Carton really had them and concealed them somewhere on the *Kilmorden Castle*—that's where he came in. They hoped that I might have some clue as to where they

were hidden. As long as the Colonel did not recover the diamonds, he was still in danger—hence his anxiety to get them at all costs. Where the devil Carton hid them, if he did hide them, I don't know."

"That's another story—my story," I said. "And I'm going to tell it to you now."

CHAPTER XXVII

ANNE'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED

HARRY listened attentively while I recounted all the events that I have narrated in these pages. The thing that bewildered and astonished him most was to find that all along the diamonds had been in my possession—or rather in Suzanne's! That was a fact he had never suspected. Of course, after hearing his story, I realized the point of Carton's little arrangement—or rather Nadina's, since I had no doubt that it was her brain which had conceived the plan. No surprise tactics executed against her or her husband could result in the seizure of the diamonds. The secret was locked in her own brain, and the Colonel was not likely to guess that they had been intrusted to the keeping of an ocean steward!

Harry's vindication from the old charge of theft seemed assured. It was the other, graver charge that paralyzed all our activities. For, as things stood, he could not come out in the open to prove his case.

The one thing we came back to, again and again, was the identity of the Colonel. Was he, or was he not, Guy Pagett?

"I should say he was—but for one thing," said Harry. "It seems pretty much of a certainty that it was Pagett who murdered Anita Grünberg at Marlow—and that certainly lends color to the supposition that he is actually the Colonel, since Anita's business was not of the nature to be discussed with a subordinate. No—the only thing that militates against that theory is the attempt to put you out of the way on the night of your arrival here. You saw Pagett left behind at Capetown—by no possible means could he have arrived here before the following Wednesday."

WE sat silent for a moment; then Harry went on slowly:

"You say that Mrs. Blair was asleep when you left the hotel and that you heard Sir Eustace dictating to Miss Pettigrew? Where was Colonel Race?"

"I could not find him anywhere."

"Had he any reason to believe that—you and I might be friendly with each other?"

"He might have had," I answered thoughtfully, remembering our conversation on the way back from the Matoppos.

"He's a very powerful personality," I continued, "but not at all my idea of the Colonel. And anyway, such an idea would be absurd. He's in the secret service."

"How do we know he is? It's the easiest thing in the world to throw out a hint of that kind. No one contradicts it, and the rumor spreads until everyone believes it as gospel truth. It provides an excuse for all sorts of doubtful things. Anne, do you like Race?"

"I do—and I don't. He repels me and at the same time fascinates me; but I know one thing—I'm always a little afraid of him."

"He was in South Africa, you know, at the time of the Kimberley robbery," said Harry slowly.

"But it was he who told Suzanne all about the Colonel and how he had been in Paris trying to get on his track."

"*Camouflage*—of a particularly clever kind."

"But where does Pagett come in? Is he in Race's pay?"

"Perhaps," said Harry slowly, "he doesn't come in at all."

"What?"

"Think back, Anne: Did you ever hear Pagett's own account of that night on the *Kilmorden*?"

"Yes—through Sir Eustace."

I repeated it.

HARRY listened closely. Then he asked:

"He saw a man coming from the direction of Sir Eustace's cabin and followed him up on deck. Is that what he says? Now, who had the cabin opposite to Sir Eustace? Colonel Race. Supposing Colonel Race crept up on deck, and failing in his attack on you, fled round the deck and met Pagett just coming through the saloon door. He knocks him down and springs inside, closing the door. We dash round and find Pagett lying there. How's that?"

"You forget that he declares positively it was you who knocked him down."

"Well, suppose that just as he regains consciousness he sees me disappearing in the distance? Wouldn't he take it for granted that I was his assailant—especially

as he thought all along it was I he was following?"

"It's possible, yes," I said slowly. "But it alters all our ideas. And there are other things."

"Most of them are open to explanation. The man who followed you in Capetown spoke to Pagett, and Pagett looked at his watch. The man might have been merely asking him the time."

"It was just a coincidence, you mean?"

"Not exactly. There's a method in all this, connecting Pagett with the affair. Why was the Mill House chosen for the murder? Was it because Pagett had been in Kimberley when the diamonds were stolen? Would he have been made the scapegoat if I had not appeared so providentially upon the scene?"

"Then you think he may be entirely innocent?"

"It looks like it; but if so, we've got to find out what he was doing in Marlow. If he's got a reasonable explanation of that, we're on the right track."

HE got up, looked at the sky, and added:

"It's past midnight. Turn in Anne, and get some sleep. Just before dawn, I'll take you over in the boat. You must catch the train at Livingstone. I've got a friend there who will keep you hidden away until the train starts. You go to Bulawayo and catch the Beira train there. I can find out from my friend in Livingstone what's going on at the hotel and where your friends are now."

"Beira—" I said meditatively.

"Yes, Anne, it's Beira for you. This is man's work. Leave it to me."

We had had a respite from emotion while we talked the situation out, but it was on us again now. We did not even look at each other.

"Very well," I said, and passed into the hut.

I lay down on the skin-covered couch, but I didn't sleep; and outside I could hear Harry Rayburn pacing up and down, up and down through the long dark hours. At last he called me.

"Come, Anne; it's time to go."

I got up and came out obediently. It was still quite dark, but I knew that dawn was not far off.

"We'll take the canoe, not the motor-boat—" Harry began; then suddenly he stopped dead and held up his hand.

"Hush—what's that?"

I listened, but could hear nothing. His ears were sharper than mine, however, the ears of a man who has lived long in the wilderness. Presently I heard it too—the faint splash of paddles in the water coming from the direction of the right bank of the river and rapidly approaching our little landing-stage.

We strained our eyes in the darkness, and could make out a dark blur on the surface of the water. It was a boat. Then there was a momentary spurt of flame. Some one had struck a match. By its light I recognized one figure, the red-bearded Dutchman of the villa at Muizenberg. The others were natives.

"Quick—back to the hut."

Harry swept me back with him. He took down a couple of rifles and a revolver from the wall.

"Can you load a rifle?"

"I never have. Show me how."

I grasped his instructions well enough. We closed the door, and Harry stood by the window which overlooked the landing-stage. The boat was just about to run alongside it.

"Who's that?" called out Harry in a ringing voice.

ANY doubt we might have had as to our visitors' intentions was swiftly resolved. A hail of bullets splattered round us. Fortunately neither of us was hit. Harry raised the rifle. It spat murderously, and again and again. I heard two groans and a splash.

"That's givin' 'em something to think about," he muttered grimly, as he reached for the second rifle. "Stand well back, Anne, for God's sake. And load quickly!"

More bullets. One just grazed Harry's cheek. His answering fire was more deadly than theirs. I had the rifle reloaded when he turned for it. He caught me close with his left arm and kissed me once savagely before he turned to the window again. Suddenly he uttered a shout.

"They're going—had enough of it. They're a good mark out there on the water, and they can't see how many of us there are. They're routed for the moment—but they'll come back. We'll have to get ready for them. He flung down the rifle and turned to me.

"Anne! You're a wonder! Brave as a lion!"

He caught me in his arms. He kissed my hair, my eyes, my mouth.

"And now to business," he said, suddenly releasing me. "Get out those tins of kerosene."

I did as I was told. He was busy inside the hut. Presently I saw him on the hut roof, crawling along with something in his arms. He rejoined me in a minute or two.

"Go down to the boat," he directed. "We'll have to carry it across the island to the other side."

He picked up the kerosene as I disappeared.

"They're coming back," I called softly. I had seen the blur moving out from the opposite shore.

He ran down to me.

"Just in time. Why—where the hell's the boat?"

Both had been cut adrift. Harry whistled softly.

"We're in a tight place, honey. Mind?"

"Not with you."

"Ah, but dying together's not much fun. We'll do better than that. See—they've got two boatloads this time. Going to land at two different points. Now for my little scenic effect."

Almost as he spoke, a long flame shot up from the hut. Its light illuminated two crouching figures huddled together on the roof.

"My old clothes—stuffed with rags—but they won't tumble to it for some time. Come, Anne; we've got to try a long chance."

Hand in hand, we raced across the island. Only a narrow channel of water divided it from the shore on that side.

"We've got to swim for it. Can you swim at all, Anne? Not that it matters—I can get you across. It's the wrong side for a boat—too many rocks; but the right side for swimming, and the right side for Livingstone."

"I can swim a little—farther than that. What's the danger, Harry?" For I had seen the grim look on his face. "Sharks?"

"No, you little goose. Sharks live in the sea. But you're sharp, Anne. Crocs—that's the trouble."

"Crocodiles?"

"Yes, don't think of them—or say your prayers, whichever you feel inclined."

WE plunged in. My prayers must have been efficacious for we reached the shore without adventure, and drew ourselves up wet and dripping on the bank.

"Now for Livingstone! It's rough going,

I'm afraid, and wet clothes wont make it any better. But it's got to be done."

That walk was a nightmare. My wet skirts flapped round my legs, and my stockings were soon torn off by the thorns. Finally I stopped, utterly exhausted. Harry came back to me.

"Hold up, honey; I'll carry you for a bit."

That was the way I came into Livingstone, slung over his shoulder like a sack of coals. How he did it for all that way, I don't know. The first faint light of dawn was just breaking. Harry's friend was a young man of twenty-odd who kept a store of native curios. His name was Ned—perhaps he had another, but I never heard it. He didn't seem in the least surprised to see Harry walk in, dripping wet, holding an equally dripping female by the hand. Men are very wonderful.

He gave us food to eat, and hot coffee, and got our clothes dried for us while we rolled ourselves in blankets. In the tiny back room of the hut we were safe from observation while he departed to make judicious inquiries as to what had become of Sir Eustace's party, and whether any of them were still at the hotel.

IT was then that I informed Harry that nothing would induce me to go to Beira. (I never meant to, anyway.) But now all reason for such proceedings had vanished. The point of the plan had been that my enemies believed me dead. Now that they knew I wasn't dead, my going to Beira would do no good whatever. They could easily follow me there and murder me quietly. I should have no one to protect me. It was finally arranged that I should join Suzanne, wherever she was, and devote all my energies to taking care of myself. On no account was I to seek adventures—or endeavor to checkmate the Colonel.

I was to remain quietly with Suzanne and await instructions from Harry. The diamonds were to be deposited in the bank at Kimberley under the name of Parker.

"There's one thing," I said thoughtfully. "We ought to have a code of some kind. We don't want to be hoodwinked again by messages purporting to come from one to the other."

"That's easy enough. Any message that comes *genuinely* from me will have the word *and* crossed out on it."

"Without trademark, none genuine," I murmured. "What about wires?"

"Any wires from me will be signed 'Andy.'"

"Train will be in before long, Harry," said Ned, putting his head in, and withdrawing it immediately.

I stood up.

"And shall I marry a nice steady man if I find one?" I asked demurely.

Harry came close to me.

"My God, Anne, if you ever marry anyone else but me, I'll wring his neck. And as for you—"

"Yes," I said, pleasurably excited.

"I shall carry you away and beat you black and blue!"

"What a delightful husband I have chosen!" I said satirically. "And doesn't he change his mind overnight!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF SIR EUSTACE PEDLER, M. P.

AS I remarked once before, I am essentially a man of peace. I yearn for a quiet life—and that's just the one thing I don't seem able to have. The relief of getting away from Pagett, with his incessant nosing out of intrigues was enormous; Miss Pettigrew is certainly a useful creature, and although there is nothing of the houri about her, one or two of her accomplishments are invaluable. It is true that I had a touch of liver at Bulawayo and behaved like a bear in consequence, but I had had a disturbed night on the train. At three A. M. an exquisitely dressed young man looking like a musical comedy hero of the Wild West entered my compartment and asked where I was going.

He repeated his question, laying stress on the fact that he was an Immigration officer. I finally succeeded in satisfying him that I was suffering from no infectious disease, that I was visiting Rhodesia from the purest of motives, and further gratified him with my full Christian names and my place of birth. I then endeavored to snatch a little sleep, but some officious ass aroused me at five-thirty with a cup of liquid sugar which he called tea. I don't think I threw it at him, but I know that was what I wanted to do. He brought me unsugared tea, stone cold, at six, and I then fell asleep utterly exhausted, to awaken just outside Bulawayo and be landed with a beastly wooden giraffe, all arms and neck!

But for these small *contretemps*, all has

been going smoothly. And then fresh calamity befell.

It was the night of our arrival at the Falls. I was dictating to Miss Pettigrew in my sitting-room, when suddenly Mrs. Blair burst in without a word of excuse, and wearing most compromising attire.

"Where's Anne?" she cried.

A nice question to ask—as though I were responsible for the girl. What did she expect Miss Pettigrew to think—that I was in the habit of producing Anne Beddingfeld from my pocket at midnight or thereabouts? Very compromising for a man in my position.

"I presume," I said coldly, "that she is in her bed."

I cleared my throat and glanced at Miss Pettigrew, to show that I was ready to resume dictating. I hoped Mrs. Blair would take the hint. She did nothing of the kind. Instead she sank into a chair, and waved a slippered foot in an agitated manner.

"She's not in her room. I've been there. I had a dream—a terrible dream, that she was in some awful danger, and I got up and went to her room, just to reassure myself, you know. She wasn't there, and her bed hadn't been slept in."

She looked at me appealingly.

"What shall I do, Sir Eustace?"

Repressing the desire to reply, "Go to bed, and don't worry over nothing—an able-bodied young woman like Anne Beddingfeld is perfectly well able to take care of herself," I frowned judicially.

"What does Race say about it?"

Why should Race have it all his own way? Let him have some of the disadvantages as well as the advantages of female society.

"I can't find him anywhere."

She was evidently making a night of it. I sighed, and sat down in a chair.

"I don't quite see the reason for your agitation," I said patiently.

"My dream—"

"That curry we had for dinner!"

"Oh, Sir Eustace!"

The woman was quite indignant. And yet everybody knows that nightmares are a direct result of injudicious eating.

"After all," I continued persuasively, "why shouldn't Anne Beddingfeld and Race go out for a little stroll without having the whole hotel aroused about it?"

"You think they've just gone out for a stroll together? But it's after midnight?"

"One does these foolish things when one

is young," I murmured, "though Race is certainly old enough to know better."

"Do you really think so?"

"I dare say they've run away to make a match of it," I continued soothingly, though fully aware that I was making an idiotic suggestion. For after all, at a place like this, where is there to run away to?

I don't know how much longer I should have gone on making feeble remarks, but at that moment Race himself walked in upon us. At any rate, I had been partly right—he had been out for a stroll; but he hadn't taken Anne with him. However, I had been quite wrong in my way of dealing with the situation. I was soon shown that. Race had the whole hotel turned upside down in three minutes. I've never seen a man more upset.

RACE is almost beside himself, poor fellow. He has left no stone unturned. All the D. C.'s, or whatever they call themselves, for hundreds of miles round have been pressed into the service. The native trackers have run about on all fours. Everything that can be done is being done—but no sign of Anne Beddingfeld. The accepted theory is that she walked in her sleep. There are signs on the path near the Bridge which seems to show that the girl walked deliberately off the edge. If so, of course, she must have been dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Unfortunately most of the footprints were obliterated by a party of tourists who chose to walk that way early on Monday morning.

I don't know that it's a very satisfactory theory. In my young days I always was told that sleepwalkers couldn't hurt themselves, that their own sixth sense took care of them, and I don't think the theory satisfies Mrs. Blair either.

I can't make that woman out. Her whole attitude toward Race has changed. She watches him now as a cat a mouse, and she makes obvious efforts to bring herself to be civil to him. And they used to be such friends. Altogether she is unlike herself, nervous, hysterical, starting and jumping at the least sound. I am beginning to think that it is high time I went to Jo'burg.

A rumor came along yesterday of a mysterious island somewhere up the river, with a man and a girl on it. Race got very excited. It turned out to be all a mare's-nest, however. The man had been there for years, and is well known to the manager of the hotel. He totes parties up and

down the river in the season, and points out crocodiles and a stray hippopotamus or so to them. I believe that he keeps a tame one which is trained to bite pieces out of the boat on occasions. Then he fends it off with a boathook, and the party feel they have really got to the back of beyond at last. How long the girl has been there is not definitely known, but it seems pretty clear that she can't be Anne, and there is a certain delicacy in interfering in other people's affairs. If I were this young fellow, I should certainly kick Race off the island if he came asking questions about my love-affairs.

LATER:

It is definitely settled that I go to Jo'burg tomorrow. Race urges me to do so. Things are getting unpleasant there, by all I hear, but I might as well go before they get worse. I dare say I shall be shot by a striker, anyway. Mrs. Blair was to have accompanied me, but at the last minute she changed her mind and decided to stay on at the Falls. It seems as though she couldn't bear to take her eyes off Race. She came to me tonight, and said with some hesitation that she had a favor to ask.

"Would I take charge of her souvenirs for her?"

"Not the animals?" I asked in lively alarm. I always felt that I should get stuck with those beastly animals sooner or later.

In the end we effected a compromise. I took charge of two small wooden boxes for her which contained fragile articles. The animals are to be packed by the local store in vast crates and sent to Capetown by rail, where Pagett will see to their being stored.

The people who are packing them say that they are of a particularly awkward shape and that special cases will have to be made. I pointed out to Mrs. Blair that by the time she has got them home, those animals will have cost her easily a pound apiece!

Pagett is straining at the leash to rejoin me in Jo'burg. I shall make an excuse of Mrs. Blair's cases to keep him in Capetown. I have written him that he must receive the cases and see to their safe disposal, as they contain rare curios of immense value.

So all is settled, and I and Miss Pettigrew go off into the blue together. And anyone who has seen Miss Pettigrew will admit that it is perfectly respectable.

CHAPTER XXIX

JOHANNESBURG, March 6th.

There is something about the state of things here that is not at all healthy. To use the well-known phrase that I have so often read, we are all living on the edge of a volcano. Bands of strikers, or so-called strikers, patrol the streets and scowl at one in a murderous fashion. They are picking out the bloated capitalists ready for when the massacres begin, I suppose. You can't ride in a taxi—if you do, strikers pull you out again. And the hotels hint pleasantly that when the food gives out, they will fling you out on the mat!

I have invented endless jobs to keep Pagett in Capetown, but at last the fertility of my imagination has given out, and he joins me tomorrow, in the spirit of the faithful dog who comes to die by his master's side. And I was getting on so well with my "Reminiscences," too! I had invented some extraordinarily witty things that the strike-leaders said to me and I said to the strike-leaders.

This morning I was interviewed by a Government official. He was urbane, persuasive and mysterious in turn. To begin with, he alluded to my exalted position and importance, and suggested that I should remove myself, or be removed by him, to Pretoria.

"You expect trouble, then?" I asked.

His reply was so worded as to have no meaning whatsoever, so I gathered that they were expecting serious trouble. I suggested to him that his Government was letting things go rather far.

"There is such a thing as giving a man enough rope, and letting him hang himself, Sir Eustace."

"Oh, quite so, quite so."

"It is not the strikers themselves who are causing the trouble. There is some organization at work behind them. Arms and explosives have been pouring in, and we have made a haul of certain documents which throw a good deal of light on the methods adopted to import them. There is a regular code. Potatoes mean *detonator*, cauliflower—*rifles*; other vegetables stand for various explosives."

"That's very interesting," I commented.

"More than that, Sir Eustace; we have every reason to believe that the man who runs the whole show, the directing genius of the affair, is at this minute in Johannesburg."

He stared at me so hard that I began to fear that he suspected me of being the man. I broke out into a cold perspiration at the thought, and began to regret that I had ever conceived the idea of inspecting a miniature revolution at first hand.

"No trains are running from Jo'burg to Pretoria," he continued. "But I can arrange to send you over by private car. In case you should be stopped on the way, I can provide you with two separate passes, one issued by the Union Government, and the other stating that you are an English visitor who has nothing whatsoever to do with the Union."

"One for your people, and one for the strikers, eh?"

"Exactly."

THE project did not appeal to me—I know what happens in a case of that kind. You get flustered and mix the things up. I should hand the wrong pass to the wrong person, and it would end in my being summarily shot by a bloodthirsty rebel, or one of the supporters of law and order whom I notice guarding the streets, wearing bowler hats and smoking pipes, with rifles tucked carelessly under their arms. Besides, what should I do with myself in Pretoria?

"My dear fellow," I said, "you don't seem to realize that I'm studying conditions on the Rand. How the devil am I going to study them from Pretoria? I appreciate your care for my safety, but don't you worry about me. I shall be all right."

"I warn you, Sir Eustace, that the food question is already serious."

"A little fasting will improve my figure," I said with a sigh.

We were interrupted by a telegram being handed to me. I read it with amazement.

Anne is safe. Here with me at Kimberley.
Suzanne Blair.

I don't think I ever really believed in the annihilation of Anne. There is something peculiarly indestructible about that young woman—she has an extraordinary knack of turning up smiling.

I refolded the telegram and got rid of my governmental friend. I don't like the prospect of being hungry, but I'm not alarmed for my personal safety. Smuts is perfectly capable of dealing with the revolution. But I would give a considerable sum of money for a drink! I wonder if Pagett will have the sense to bring a bottle

of whisky with him when he arrives to-morrow?

I put on my hat and went out, intending to buy a few souvenirs. The curio-shops in Jo'burg are rather pleasant. I was just studying a window full of imposing karosses, when a man coming out of the shop cannoned into me. To my surprise, it turned out to be Race.

I can't flatter myself that he looked pleased to see me. As a matter of fact, he looked distinctly annoyed, but I insisted on his accompanying me back to the hotel. I get tired of having no one but Miss Pettigrew to talk to.

"I had no idea you were in Jo'burg," I said. "When did you arrive?"

"Last night."

"Where are you staying?"

"With friends."

He was disposed to be extraordinarily taciturn, and seemed to be embarrassed by my questions.

"I hope they keep poultry," I remarked. "A diet of new-laid eggs, and the occasional slaughtering of an old cock, will be decidedly agreeable soon, from all I hear."

"By the way," I added when we were back in the hotel, "have you heard that Miss Beddingfeld is alive and kicking?"

He nodded.

"She gave us quite a fright," I said airily. "Where the devil did she go to that night; that's what I'd like to know."

"She was on the island all the time."

"Which island? Not the one with the young man on it?"

"Yes."

"How very improper!" I said. "Pagett will be quite shocked. He always did disapprove of Anne Beddingfeld. I suppose that was the young man she originally intended to meet in Durban?"

"I don't think so."

"Don't tell me anything you don't want to," I said, by way of encouraging him.

"I fancy that this is a young man we should all be very glad to lay our hands on."

"Not—" I cried, in rising excitement.

He nodded.

"Harry Rayburn—*alias* Harry Lucas—that's his real name, you know. He's given us all the slip once more, but we're bound to rope him in soon."

"Dear me, dear me!" I murmured.

"We don't suspect the girl of complicity in any case. On her side it's—just a love-affair."

I always did think Race was in love with Anne. The way he said those last words made me feel sure of it.

"She's gone to Beira," he continued rather hastily.

"Indeed," I said, staring. "How do you know?"

"She wrote to me from Bulawayo, telling me she was going home that way. The best thing she can do, poor child!"

"Somehow, I don't fancy she is in Beira," I said meditatively.

"She was just starting when she wrote."

I was puzzled. Somebody was clearly lying. Without stopping to reflect that Anne might have excellent reasons for her misleading statements, I gave myself up to the pleasure of scoring off Race. He is always so cocksure. I took the telegram from my pocket and handed it to him.

"Then how do you explain this?" I asked nonchalantly.

He seemed dumfounded.

"She said she was just starting for Beira," he said in a dazed voice.

I know that Race is supposed to be clever. He is, in my opinion, rather a stupid man. It never seemed to occur to him that girls do not always tell the truth.

"Kimberley too. What are they doing there?" he muttered.

"Yes, that surprised me. I should have thought Miss Anne would have been in the thick of it here, gathering copy for the *Daily Budget*."

"Kimberley!" he said again. The place seemed to upset him. "There's nothing to see there—the pits aren't being worked."

"You know what women are," I said vaguely.

He shook his head and went off. I have evidently given him something to think about.

NO sooner had he departed than my Government official reappeared.

"I hope you will forgive me for troubling you again, Sir Eustace," he apologized, "but there are one or two questions I should like to ask you."

"Certainly, my dear fellow," I said cheerfully. "Ask away."

"It concerns your secretary—"

"I know nothing about him," I said hastily. "He foisted himself upon me in London, robbed me of valuable papers—for which I shall be hauled over the coals—and disappeared at Capetown. It's true that I was at the Falls at the same time

as he was, but I was at the hotel, and he was on an island. I can assure you that I never set eyes upon him the whole time that I was there."

"You misunderstand me. It was of your other secretary that I spoke."

"What—Pagett?" I cried in lively astonishment. "He's been with me eight years—a most trustworthy fellow."

My interlocutor smiled. "We are still at cross-purposes. I refer to the lady."

"Miss Pettigrew?" I exclaimed.

"Yes. She has been seen coming out of Agravato's Native Curio-shop."

"God bless my soul!" I interrupted. "I was going into that place myself this afternoon. You might have caught *me* coming out!"

There doesn't seem to be any innocent thing that one can do in Jo'burg without being suspected for it.

"Ah, but she has been there more than once—and in rather doubtful circumstances. I may as well tell you—in confidence, Sir Eustace—that the place is suspected of being a well-known rendezvous used by the secret organization behind this revolution. That is why I should be glad to hear all that you can tell me about this lady. Where and how did you come to engage her?"

"She was lent to me," I replied coldly, "by your own Government."

He collapsed utterly.

CHAPTER XXX

ANNE'S NARRATIVE RESUMED

AS soon as I got to Kimberley, I wired to Suzanne. She joined me there with the utmost dispatch, heralding her arrival with telegrams sent off en route. I was awfully surprised to find that she really was fond of me—I thought I had been just a new sensation, but she positively fell on my neck and wept when we met.

When we had recovered from our emotion a little, I sat down on the bed and told her the whole story from A to Z.

"You always did suspect Colonel Race," she said thoughtfully when I had finished. "I didn't until the night you disappeared. I liked him so much all along, and thought he would make such a nice husband for you. Oh, Anne, dear, don't be cross, but how do you know that this young man of yours is telling the truth? You believe every word he says."

"Of course I do!" I cried indignantly.

"But what is there in him that attracts you so? I don't see that there's anything to him at all except his rather reckless good looks and his modern Stone Age love-making."

I poured the vials of my wrath upon Suzanne for some minutes.

"Just because you're comfortably married and getting fat, you've forgotten that there's any such thing as romance," I ended.

"I'm not getting fat, Anne. All the worry I've had about you lately must have worn me to a shred."

"You look particularly well nourished," I said coldly. "I should say you must have put on about a half a stone."

"And I don't know that I'm so comfortably married, either," continued Suzanne in a melancholy voice. "I've been having the most dreadful cables from Clarence ordering me to come home at once. At last I didn't answer them, and now I haven't heard for over a fortnight."

I'm afraid I didn't take Suzanne's matrimonial troubles very seriously. She will be able to get round Clarence all right when the time comes. I turned the conversation to the subject of the diamonds.

Suzanne looked at me with a dropped jaw.

"I must explain, Anne. You see, as soon as I began to suspect Colonel Race, I was terribly upset about the diamonds. I wanted to stay on at the Falls in case he might have kidnaped you somewhere close by, but didn't know what to do about the diamonds. I was afraid to keep them in my possession—"

Suzanne looked round her uneasily, as though she feared the walls might have ears, and then whispered vehemently in my ear.

"A distinctly good idea," I approved, "—at the time, that is. It's a bit awkward now. What did Sir Eustace do with the cases?"

"The big ones were sent down to Capetown. I heard from Pagett before I left the Falls, and he inclosed the receipt for their storage. He's leaving Capetown today, by the by, to join Sir Eustace in Johannesburg."

"I see," I said thoughtfully. "And the small ones, where are they?"

"I suppose Sir Eustace has got them with him."

I turned the matter over in my mind.

"Well," I said at last, "it's awkward—but it's safe enough. We'd better do nothing for the present."

Suzanne looked at me with a little smile.

"You don't like doing nothing, do you, Anne?"

"Not very much," I replied honestly.

THE one thing I could do was to get hold of a time-table and see what time Guy Pagett's train would pass through Kimberley. I found that it would arrive at five-forty on the following afternoon and depart again at six. I wanted to see Pagett as soon as possible, and that seemed to me a good opportunity. The situation on the Rand was getting very serious, and it might be a long time before I got another chance.

The only thing that livened up the day was a wire dispatched from Johannesburg—a most innocent-sounding telegram:

Arrived safely. All going well. Eric here, also Eustace but not Guy. Remain where you are for the present.

ANDY.

Eric was our pseudonym for Race. I chose it because it is a name I dislike exceedingly. There was clearly nothing to be done until I could see Pagett. Suzanne employed herself in sending off a long soothing cable to the far-off Clarence. She became quite sentimental over him. In her way, which of course is quite different from me and Harry, she is really fond of Clarence.

"I do wish he was here, Anne," she gulped. "It's such a long time since I've seen him."

"Have some face-cream," I said soothingly.

Suzanne rubbed a little on the tip of her charming nose.

"I shall want some more face-cream soon, too," she remarked, "and you can only get this kind in Paris." She sighed. "Paris!"

"Suzanne," I said, "very soon you'll have had enough of South Africa and adventure."

"I should like a really nice hat," admitted Suzanne wistfully. "Shall I come with you to meet Guy Pagett tomorrow?"

"I prefer to go alone. He'd be shy, speaking before two of us."

So it came about that I was standing in the doorway of the hotel on the following afternoon, struggling with a recalcitrant parasol that refused to go up, while Suzanne lay peacefully on her bed with a book.

According to the hotel porter, the train was on its good behavior today and would be almost on time, though he was extremely doubtful whether it would ever get through to Johannesburg. The line had been blown up, so he solemnly assured me. It sounded cheerful!

The train drew in just ten minutes late. Everybody tumbled out on the platform and began walking up and down feverishly. I had no difficulty in espying Pagett. I accosted him eagerly. He gave his usual nervous start at seeing me—somewhat accentuated this time.

"Dear me, Miss Beddingfeld, I understood that you had disappeared!"

"I have reappeared again," I told him solemnly. "And how are you, Mr. Pagett?"

"Very well, thank you—looking forward to taking up my work again with Sir Eustace."

"Mr. Pagett," I said, "there is something I want to ask you. I hope that you won't be offended, but a lot hangs on it, more than you can possibly guess. I want to know what you were doing at Marlow on the eighth of January last?"

He started violently.

"Really, Miss Beddingfeld—I—indeed—"

"You *were* there, weren't you?"

"I—for reasons of my own I was in the neighborhood, yes."

"Won't you tell me what those reasons were?"

"Sir Eustace has not already told you?"

"Sir Eustace? Does he know?"

"I am almost sure that he does. I hoped he had not recognized me, but from the hints he has let drop, and his remarks, I fear it is only too certain. In any case I meant to make a clean breast of the matter and offer him my resignation. He is a peculiar man, Miss Beddingfeld—with an abnormal sense of honor. It seems to amuse him to keep me on tenterhooks. All the time, I dare say, he was perfectly well aware of the true facts. Possibly he has known them for years."

I hoped that sooner or later I should be able to understand what Pagett was talking about. He went on fluently:

"It is difficult for a man of Sir Eustace's standing to put himself in my position. I know that I was in the wrong—but it seemed a harmless deception. I would have thought it better taste on his part to have tackled me outright, instead of indulging in covert jokes at my expense."

A whistle blew, and the people began to surge back into the train.

"Yes, Mr. Pagett," I broke in, "I'm sure I quite agree with all you're saying about Sir Eustace. *But why did you go to Marlow?*"

"It was wrong of me, but natural under the circumstances—yes, I still feel, natural under the circumstances."

"What circumstances?" I cried desperately.

For the first time Pagett seemed to recognize that I was asking him a question. His mind detached itself from the peculiarities of Sir Eustace, and his own justification, and came to rest on me.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Beddingfeld," he said stiffly, "but I fail to see your concern in the matter."

He was back in the train now, leaning down to speak to me. I felt desperate. What could one do with a man like that?

"Of course if it's so dreadful that you'd be ashamed to speak of it to me—" I began.

At last I had found the right stop. Pagett stiffened and flushed.

"Dreadful? Ashamed? I don't understand you."

"Then tell me."

In three short sentences he told me. At last I knew Pagett's secret! It was not in the least what I had expected.

I walked slowly back to the hotel. There a wire was handed to me. I tore it open. It contained full and definite instructions for me to proceed forthwith to Johannesburg, or rather to a station this side of Johannesburg, where I should be met by a car. It was signed, not "Andy," but "Harry."

I sat down in a chair to do some very serious thinking.

CHAPTER XXXI

FROM THE DIARY OF SIR EUSTACE
PEDLER, M. P.

JOHANNESBURG. March 7th.

Pagett has arrived. He is in a blue funk, of course. Suggested at once that we should go off to Pretoria. Then, when I had told him kindly but firmly that we were going to remain here, he went to the other extreme, wished he had his rifle here, and began bucking about some bridge he had guarded during the Great War—a railway bridge at Little Puddicombe Junction, or something of that sort.

I soon cut that short by telling him to unpack the big typewriter. I thought that that would keep him employed for some time, because the typewriter was sure to have gone wrong—it always does—and he would have to take it somewhere to be mended. But I had forgotten Pagett's powers of being in the right.

"I've already unpacked all the cases, Sir Eustace. The typewriter is in perfect condition."

"What do you mean—all the cases?"

"The two small cases as well."

"I wish you wouldn't be so officious, Pagett. Those small cases were no business of yours. They belong to Mrs. Blair."

Pagett looked crestfallen. He hates to make a mistake.

"So you can just pack them up again neatly," I continued. "After that, you can go out and look around you. Jo'burg will probably be a heap of smoking ruins by tomorrow, so it may be your last chance."

I thought that that would get rid of him successfully for the morning, at any rate.

"There is something I want to say to you when you have the leisure, Sir Eustace."

"I haven't got it now," I said hastily. "At this minute I have absolutely no leisure whatsoever."

Pagett retired.

"By the way," I called after him, "what was there in those cases of Mrs. Blair's?"

"Some fur rugs, and couple of fur—hats, I think."

"That's right," I assented. "She bought them on the train. They *are* hats—of a kind, though I hardly wonder at your not recognizing them. I dare say she's going to wear one of them at Ascot. What else was there?"

"Some rolls of films, and some baskets—a lot of baskets—"

"There would be," I assured him. "Mrs. Blair is the kind of woman who never buys less than a dozen or so of anything."

"I think that's all, Sir Eustace, except some miscellaneous odds and ends, a motor-veil and some odd gloves—that sort of thing."

"If you hadn't been a born idiot, Pagett, you would have seen from the start that those couldn't possibly be my belongings."

"I thought some of them might belong to Miss Pettigrew."

"Ah, that reminds me—what did you

mean by picking me out such a doubtful character as a secretary?"

And I told him about the searching cross-examination I had been put through. Immediately I was sorry—I saw a glint in his eye that I knew only too well. I changed the conversation hurriedly. But it was too late. Pagett was on the war-path.

He next proceeded to bore me with a long, pointless story about the *Kilmorden*. It was about a roll of films and a wager, the roll of films being thrown through a porthole in the middle of the night by some steward who ought to have known better. I hate horse-play. I told Pagett so, and he began to tell me the story all over again. He tells a story extremely badly, anyway. It was a long time before I could make head or tail of this one.

I DID not see him again until lunch-time.

Then he came in brimming over with excitement, like a bloodhound on the scent. I never have cared for bloodhounds. The upshot of it all was that he had seen Rayburn.

"What!" I cried, startled.

Yes, he had caught sight of some one who, he was sure, was Rayburn crossing the street. Pagett had followed him.

"And whom do you think I saw him stop and speak to? Miss Pettigrew!"

"What?"

"Yes, Sir Eustace. And that's not all. I've been making inquiries about her—"

"Wait a bit. What happened to Rayburn?"

"He and Miss Pettigrew went into that corner curio-shop."

I uttered an involuntary exclamation. Pagett stopped inquiringly.

"Nothing," I said. "Go on."

"I waited outside for ages—but they didn't come out. At last I went in. Sir Eustace, there was no one in the shop! There must be another way out."

I stared at him.

"As I was saying, I came back to the hotel and made some inquiries about Miss Pettigrew." Pagett lowered his voice and breathed hard as he always does when he wants to be confidential. "Sir Eustace, a man was seen coming out of her room last night."

I raised my eyebrows.

"And I always regarded her as a lady of such eminent respectability," I murmured.

Pagett went on without heeding:

"I went straight up and searched her room. What do you think I found?"

I shook my head.

"This!" Pagett held up a safety razor and a stick of shaving-soap.

"What should a woman want with these?"

I don't suppose Pagett ever reads the advertisements in the high-class ladies' papers. I do. While not proposing to argue with him on the subject, I refused to accept the presence of the razor as proof positive of Miss Pettigrew's sex. Pagett is so hopelessly behind the times. I should not have been at all surprised if he had produced a cigarette-case to support this theory. However, even Pagett has his limits.

"You're not convinced, Sir Eustace. What do you say to *this*?"

I inspected the article which he dangled aloft triumphantly.

"It looks like hair. I think it's what they call a toupee."

"Indeed," I commented.

"Now are you convinced that that Pettigrew woman is a man in disguise?"

"Really, my dear Pagett, I think I am. I might have known it by her feet."

"Then that's that. And now, Sir Eustace, I want to speak to you about my private affairs. I cannot doubt, from your hints and your continual allusions to the time I was in Florence, that you have found me out."

AT last the mystery of what Pagett did in Florence is going to be revealed.

"Make a clean breast of it, my dear fellow," I said kindly. "Much the best way."

"Thank you, Sir Eustace."

"Is it her husband? Annoying fellows, husbands. Always turning up when they're least expected."

"I fail to follow you, Sir Eustace. Whose husband?"

"The lady's husband."

"What lady?"

"God bless my soul, Pagett, the lady you met in Florence. There must have been a lady? Don't tell me that you merely robbed a church or stabbed an Italian in the back because you didn't like his face?"

"I am quite at a loss to understand you, Sir Eustace. I suppose you are joking."

"I am an amusing fellow sometimes, when I take the trouble, but I can assure you that I am not trying to be funny this minute."

"I hoped that as I was a good way off, you had not recognized me, Sir Eustace."

"Recognized you where?"

"At Marlow, Sir Eustace."

"At Marlow? What the devil were you doing at Marlow?"

"I thought you understood that—"

"I'm beginning to understand less and less. Go back to the beginning of the story and start again. You went to Florence—"

"Then you don't know, after all—and you didn't recognize me!"

"As far as I can judge, you seem to have given yourself away needlessly—made a coward of by your conscience. But I shall be able to tell better when I've heard the whole story. Now then, take a deep breath and start again. You went to Florence—"

"But I didn't go to Florence. That is just it."

"Well, where did you go then?"

"I went home—to Marlow."

"What the devil did you want to go to Marlow for?"

"I wanted to see my wife. She was in delicate health and expecting—"

"Your wife? But I didn't know you were married?"

"No, Sir Eustace; that's just what I am telling you. I deceived you in the matter."

"How long have you been married?"

"Just over eight years. I had been married just six months when I became your secretary. I did not want to lose the post. A resident secretary is not supposed to have a wife, so I suppressed the fact."

"You take my breath away," I remarked. "Where has she been all these years?"

"We have had a small bungalow on the river at Marlow, quite close to the Mill House, for over five years."

"God bless my soul," I muttered. "Any children?"

"Four children, Sir Eustace."

I gazed at him in a kind of stupor. I might have known, all along, that a man like Pagett couldn't have a guilty secret. The respectability of Pagett has always been my bane. That's just the kind of secret he would have—a wife and four children.

"Have you told this to anyone else?" I demanded at last, when I had gazed at him in fascinated interest for quite a long while.

"Only Miss Beddingfeld. She came to the station at Kimberley."

I continued to stare at him. He fidgeted under my glance.

"I hope, Sir Eustace, that you are not seriously annoyed?"

"My dear fellow," I said, "I don't mind telling you here and now that you've blinking well torn it!"

I went out, seriously ruffled. As I passed the corner curio-shop, I was assailed by a sudden irresistible temptation and went in. The proprietor came forward, obsequiously rubbing his hands.

"Can I show you something? Furs, curios?"

"I want something quite out of the ordinary," I said. "It's for a special occasion. Will you show me what you've got?"

"Perhaps you will come into my back room? We have many specialties there."

That is where I made a mistake. And I thought I was going to be so clever. I followed him through the swinging portières.

CHAPTER XXXII

ANNE'S NARRATIVE RESUMED

I HAD great trouble with Suzanne. She argued; she pleaded—she even wept before she would let me carry out my plan. But in the end I got my own way. She promised to carry out my instructions to the letter and came down to the station to bid me a tearful farewell.

I arrived at my destination the following morning early. I was met by a short black-bearded Dutchman whom I had never seen before. He had a car waiting, and we drove off. There was a queer booming in the distance, and I asked him what it was. "Guns," he answered laconically. So there was fighting going on in Jo'burg!

I gathered that our objective was a spot somewhere in the suburbs of the city. We turned and twisted and made several détours to get there, and every minute the guns were nearer. It was an exciting time. At last we stopped before a somewhat ramshackle building. The door was opened by a Kaffir boy. My guide signed to me to enter. I stood irresolute in the dingy

square hall. The man passed me and threw open a door.

"The young lady to see Mr. Harry Rayburn," he said, and laughed.

Thus announced, I passed in. The room was sparsely furnished and smelt of cheap tobacco-smoke. Behind a desk a man sat writing. He looked up and raised his eyebrows.

"Dear me," he said. "If it isn't Miss Beddingfeld!"

"I must be seeing double," I apologized. "Is it Mr. Chichester, or is it Miss Pettigrew? There is an extraordinary resemblance to both of them."

"Both characters are in abeyance for the moment. I have doffed my petticoats—and my cloth likewise. Wont you sit down?"

I accepted a seat composedly.

"It would seem," I remarked, "that I have come to the wrong address."

"From your point of view, I am afraid you have. Really, Miss Beddingfeld, to fall into the trap a second time!"

"It was not very bright of me," I admitted meekly.

Something about my manner seemed to puzzle him.

"You hardly seem upset by the occurrence," he remarked dryly.

"Would my going into heroics have any effect upon you?" I asked.

"It certainly would not."

"My Great-Aunt Jane always used to say that a true lady was neither shocked nor surprised at anything that might happen," I murmured dreamily. "I endeavor to live up to her precepts."

I read Mr. Chichester-Pettigrew's opinion so plainly written on his face that I hastened into speech once more.

"You really are positively marvelous at make-up," I said generously. "All the time you were Miss Pettigrew, I never recognized you—even when you broke your pencil in the shock of seeing me climb upon the train at Capetown."

He tapped upon the desk with the pencil he was holding in his hand at the minute.

"All this is very well in its way, but we must get to business. Perhaps, Miss Beddingfeld, you can guess why we required your presence here?"

"You will excuse me," I said, "but I never do business with anyone but principals."

I had read the phrase, or something like

it, in a money-lender's circular, and I was rather pleased with it. It certainly had a devastating effect upon Mr. Chichester-Pettigrew. He opened his mouth and then shut it again. I beamed upon him.

"My Great-Uncle George's maxim," I added as an afterthought. "Great-Aunt Jane's husband, you know. He made knobs for brass beds."

I doubt if Chichester-Pettigrew had ever been ragged before. He didn't like it at all.

"I think you would be wise to alter your tone, young lady."

I did not reply, but yawned—a delicate little yawn that hinted at intense boredom.

"What the devil—" he began forcibly.

I interrupted him:

"I can assure you it's no good shouting at me. We are only wasting time here. I have no intention of talking with underlings. You will save a lot of time and annoyance by taking me straight to Sir Eustace Pedler."

"To—"

He looked dumfounded.

"Yes," I said, "Sir Eustace Pedler."

"I—I—excuse me—"

HE bolted from the room like a rabbit. I took advantage of the respite to open my bag and powder my nose thoroughly. Also I settled my hat at a more becoming angle. Then I settled myself to wait with patience for my enemy's return.

He reappeared in a chastened mood.

"Will you come this way, Miss Beddingfeld?"

I followed him up the stairs. He knocked at the door of a room; a brisk "Come in!" sounded from inside, and he opened the door and motioned to me to pass inside.

Sir Eustace Pedler sprang up to greet me, genial and smiling.

"Well, well, Miss Anne!" He shook me warmly by the hand. "I'm delighted to see you. Come and sit down. Not tired after your journey? That's good."

He sat down facing me, still beaming. It left me rather at a loss. His manner was so completely natural.

"Quite right to insist on being brought straight to me," he went on. "Minks is a fool. A clever actor—but a fool! That was Minks you saw downstairs."

"Oh, really," I said feebly.

"And now," said Sir Eustace cheerfully, "let's get down to facts. How long have you known that I was the Colonel?"

"Ever since Mr. Pagett told me that he had seen you in Marlow when you were supposed to be in Cannes."

Sir Eustace nodded ruefully.

"Yes, I told the fool he'd blinking well torn it. He didn't understand, of course. His whole mind was set on whether I'd recognized him. It never occurred to him to wonder what I was doing down there. A piece of sheer bad luck, that was. I arranged it all so carefully, too, sending him off to Florence, telling the hotel I was going over to Nice for one night or possibly two. Then, by the time the murder was discovered, I was back again in Cannes with nobody dreaming that I'd ever left the Riviera."

He still spoke quite naturally and unaffectedly. I had to pinch myself to understand that this was all real—that the man in front of me was really that deep-dyed criminal the Colonel. I followed things out in my mind.

"Then it was you who tried to throw me overboard on the *Kilmorden*!" I said slowly. "It was you that Pagett followed up on deck that night?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I apologize, my dear child—I really do. I always liked you—but you were so confoundedly interfering. I couldn't have all my plans brought to naught by a chit of a girl."

"I think your plan at the Falls was really the cleverest," I said, endeavoring to look at the thing in a detached fashion. "I would have been ready to swear anywhere that you were in the hotel when I went out. Seeing is believing in future."

"Yes, Minks had one of his greatest successes as Miss Pettigrew, and he can imitate my voice quite creditably."

"There is one thing I should like to know."

"Yes?"

"How did you induce Pagett to engage her?"

"Oh, that was quite simple. She met Pagett in the doorway of the Trade Commissioner's offices or the Chamber of Mines or wherever it was he went—told him I had phoned down in a hurry, and that she had been selected by the Government department in question. Pagett swallowed it like a lamb."

"You're very frank," I said, studying him.

"There's no earthly reason why I shouldn't be."

I DIDN'T quite like the sound of that. I hastened to put my own interpretation on it.

"You believe in the success of this revolution? You've burnt your boats."

"For an otherwise intelligent young woman, that's a singularly unintelligent remark. No, my dear child, I do not believe in this revolution. I give it a couple of days longer, and it will fizzle out ignominiously."

"Not one of your successes, in fact?" I said hastily.

"Like all women, you've no idea of business. The job I took on was to supply certain explosives and arms—heavily paid for—to foment feeling generally, and to incriminate certain people up to the hilt. I've carried out my contract with complete success, and I was careful to be paid in advance. I took special care over the whole thing, as I intended it to be my last contract before retiring from business. As for burning my boats, as you call it, I simply don't know what you mean. I'm not the rebel chief, or anything of that kind; I'm a distinguished English visitor, who had the misfortune to go nosing into a certain curio-shop—and saw a little more than he was meant to, and so the poor fellow was kidnapped. Tomorrow, or the day after, when circumstances permit, I shall be found tied up somewhere, in a pitiable state of terror and starvation."

"Ah," I said slowly, "but what about me?"

"That's just it," said Sir Eustace softly. "What about you? I've got you here—I don't want to rub it in in any way—but I've got you here very neatly. The question is what am I going to do with you? The simplest way of disposing of you—and I may add, the pleasantest to myself—is the way of marriage. Wives can't accuse their husbands, you know, and I'd rather like a pretty young wife to hold my hand and glance at me out of liquid eyes—Don't flash them at me so—you quite frighten me. I see that the plan does not commend itself to you?"

"It does not."

Sir Eustace sighed.

"A pity! But I am no stock-company villain. The usual trouble, I suppose. You love another, as the books say."

"I love another."

"I thought as much; first I thought it was that long-legged, pompous ass Race, but I suppose it's the young hero who

fished you out of the Falls that night. Women have no taste. Neither of those two have the brains I have. I'm such an easy person to underestimate."

I think he was right about that. Although I knew well enough the kind of man he was and must be, I could not bring myself to realize it. He had tried to kill me on more than one occasion; he had actually killed another woman; and he was responsible for endless other deeds of which I knew nothing; and yet I was quite unable to bring myself into the frame of mind for appreciating his deeds as they deserved. I could not think of him as other than our amusing, genial traveling companion. I could not even feel frightened of him—and yet I knew he was capable of having me murdered in cold blood if it struck him as necessary. The only parallel I can think of is the case of Stevenson's *Long John Silver*. He must have been the same kind of man.

"Well, well," said this extraordinary person, leaning back in his chair. "It's a pity that the idea of being Lady Pedler doesn't appeal to you. The other alternatives are rather crude."

I felt a nasty feeling going up and down my spine. Of course I had known all along that I was taking a big risk—but the prize had seemed worth it. Would things turn out as I had calculated, or would they not?

"The fact of the matter is," Sir Eustace was continuing, "that I've a weakness for you. I really don't want to proceed to extremes. Suppose you tell me the whole story, from the very beginning, and let's see what we can make of it. But no romancing, mind—I want the truth."

I WAS not going to make any mistake over that. I had a great deal of respect for Sir Eustace's shrewdness. It was a moment for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I told him the whole story, omitting nothing, up to the moment of my rescue by Harry. When I had finished, he nodded his head in approval.

"Wise girl! You've made a clean breast of the thing. And let me tell you I should soon have found you out if you hadn't. A lot of people wouldn't believe your story, anyway, especially the beginning part; but I do. You're the kind of girl who would start off like that—at a moment's notice, on the slenderest of motives. You've had amazing luck, of course,

but sooner or later the amateur runs up against the professional, and then the result is a foregone conclusion. I am the professional. I started on this business when I was quite a youngster. All things considered, it seemed to me a good way of getting rich quickly. I always could think things out, and devise ingenious schemes—and I never made the mistake of trying to carry out my schemes myself. Always employ the expert—that has been my motto.

"The one time I departed from it I came to grief—but I couldn't trust anyone to do that job for me. Nadina knew too much. I'm an easy-going man, kind-hearted and good-tempered so long as I'm not thwarted. Nadina both thwarted me and threatened me—just as I was at the apex of a successful career. Once she was dead and the diamonds were in my possession, I was safe. I've come to the conclusion now that I bungled the job. That idiot Pagett, with his wife and family! My fault—it tickled my sense of humor to employ the fellow, with his Cinquecento poisoner's face and his mid-Victorian soul. A maxim for you, my dear Anne: Don't let your sense of humor carry you away. For years I've had an instinct that it would be wise to get rid of Pagett, but the fellow was so hard-working and conscientious that I honestly couldn't find an excuse for sacking him. So I let things drift.

"But we're wandering from the point. The question is what to do with you. Your narrative was admirably clear, but there is one thing that still escapes me. Where are the diamonds now?"

"Harry Rayburn has them," I said, watching him.

His face did not change; it retained its expression of sardonic good humor.

"H'm! I want those diamonds."

"I don't see much chance of your getting them," I replied.

"Don't you? Now, I do. I don't want to be unpleasant, but I should like you to reflect that a dead girl or so found in this quarter of the city will occasion no surprise. There's a man downstairs who does that sort of job very neatly. Now, you're a sensible young woman. What I propose is this: you will sit down and write to Harry Rayburn, telling him to join you here and bring the diamonds with him—"

"I won't do anything of the kind."

"Don't interrupt your elders. I propose to make a bargain with you. The dia-

monds in exchange for your life. And don't make any mistake about it: your life is absolutely in my power."

"And Harry?"

"I'm far too tender-hearted to part two young lovers. He shall go free too—on the understanding, of course, that neither of you will interfere with me in future."

"And what guarantee have I that you will keep your side of the bargain?"

"None whatever, my dear girl. You'll have to trust me and hope for the best. Of course, if you're in a heroic mood and prefer annihilation, that's another matter."

THIS was what I had been playing for. I was careful not to jump at the bait. Gradually I allowed myself to be bullied and cajoled into yielding. I wrote at Sir Eustace's dictation:

"Dear Harry:

"I think I see a chance of establishing your innocence beyond any possible doubt. Please follow my instructions minutely. Go to Agrasato's Curio-shop. Ask to see something 'out of the ordinary—for a special occasion.' The man will then ask you to 'come into the back room.' Go with him. You will find a messenger who will bring you to me. Do exactly as he tells you. Be sure and bring the diamonds with you. Not a word to anyone."

Sir Eustace stopped.

"I leave the fancy touches to your own imagination," he remarked. "But be careful to make no mistakes."

"'Yours forever and ever, Anne,' will be sufficient," I remarked.

I wrote in the words. Sir Eustace stretched out his hand for the letter and read it through.

"That seems all right. Now the address."

I gave it him. It was that of a small shop which received letters and telegrams for a consideration.

He struck the bell upon the table with his hand. Chichester-Pettigrew, alias Minks, answered the summons.

"This letter is to go immediately—the usual route."

"Very well, Colonel."

He looked at the name on the envelope. Sir Eustace was watching him keenly.

"A friend of yours, I think?"

"Of mine?"

The man seemed startled.

"You had a prolonged conversation with him in Johannesburg yesterday."

"A man came up and questioned me about your movements and those of Colonel Race. I gave him misleading information."

"Excellent, my dear fellow, excellent," said Sir Eustace genially. "My mistake."

I chanced to look at Chichester-Pettigrew as he left the room. He was white to the lips, as though in deadly terror. No sooner was he outside, than Sir Eustace picked up a speaking-tube that rested by his elbow, and spoke down it:

"That you, Schwart? Watch Minks. He's not to leave the house without orders."

HE put the speaking-tube down again, and frowned slightly, tapping the table with his hand.

"May I ask you a few questions, Sir Eustace?" I said, after a minute or two of silence.

"Certainly. What excellent nerves you have, Anne! You are capable of taking an intelligent interest in things when most girls would be sniffing and wringing their hands."

"Why did you take Harry as your secretary instead of giving him up to the police?"

"I wanted those cursed diamonds. Nadina, the little devil, was playing off your Harry against me. Unless I gave her the price she wanted, she threatened to sell them back to him. That was another mistake I made—I thought she'd have them with her that day. But she was too clever for that. Carton, her husband, was dead too—I'd no clue whatsoever as to where the diamonds were hidden. Then I managed to get a copy of a wireless message sent to Nadina by some one on board the *Kilmorden*—either Carton or Rayburn, I didn't know which. It was a duplicate of that piece of paper you picked up. *Seventeen one twenty-two* it ran. I took it to be an appointment with Rayburn, and when he was so desperate to get aboard the *Kilmorden* I was convinced that I was right. So I pretended to swallow his statements, and let him come. I kept a pretty sharp watch upon him and hoped that I should learn more. Then I found Minks trying to play a lone hand, and interfering with me. I soon stopped that. He came to heel all right. It was annoying not getting Cabin Seventeen, and it worried me not being able to place you. Were you the innocent young girl you seemed, or were you not? When Rayburn set out

to keep the appointment that night, Minks was told off to intercept him. Minks muffed it, of course."

"But why did the wireless message say Seventeen instead of Seventy-one?"

"I've thought that out. Carton must have given that wireless operator his own memorandum to copy off onto a form, and he never read the copy through. The operator made the same mistake we all did, and read it as 17. 1. 22 instead of 1. 71. 22. The thing I don't know is how Minks got on to Cabin Seventeen. It must have been sheer instinct."

"And the dispatch to General Smuts? Who tampered with that?"

"My dear Anne, you don't suppose I was going to have a lot of my plans given away, without making an effort to save them? With an escaped murderer as a secretary, I had no hesitation whatever in substituting blanks. Nobody would think of suspecting poor old Pedler."

"What about Colonel Race?"

"Yes, that was a nasty jar. When Pagett told me he was a Secret Service fellow, I had an unpleasant feeling down the spine. I remembered that he'd been around Nadina in Paris during the war—and I had a horrible suspicion that he was out after *me*! I don't like the way he's stuck to me ever since. He's one of those strong, silent men who have always got something up their sleeve."

A WHISTLE sounded. Sir Eustace picked up the tube, listened for a minute or two, then answered:

"Very well, I'll see him now."

"Business," he remarked. "Miss Anne, let me show you your room."

He ushered me into a small shabby apartment; a Kaffir boy brought up my small suitcase; and Sir Eustace, urging me to ask for anything I wanted, withdrew, the picture of a courteous host. A can of hot water was on the washstand, and I proceeded to unpack a few necessities. Something hard and unfamiliar in my sponge-bag puzzled me greatly. I untied the string and looked inside.

To my utter amazement I drew out a small pearl-handled revolver. It hadn't been there when I started from Kimberley. I examined the thing gingerly. It appeared to be loaded.

I handled it with a comfortable feeling. It was a useful thing to have in a house such as this. But modern clothes are quite

unsuited to the carrying of firearms. In the end I pushed it gingerly into the top of my stocking. It made a terrible bulge, and I expected every minute that it would go off and shoot me in the leg, but it really seemed the only place.

CHAPTER XXXIII

I WAS not summoned to Sir Eustace's presence until late in the afternoon. Eleven o'clock tea and a substantial lunch had been served to me in my own apartment, and I felt fortified for further conflict.

Sir Eustace was alone. He was walking up and down the room, and there was a gleam in his eye and a restlessness in his manner which did not escape me. He was exultant about something. There was a subtle change in his manner toward me.

"I have news for you. Your young man is on his way. He will be here in a few minutes. Moderate your transports—I have something more to say. You attempted to deceive me this morning. I warned you that you would be wise to stick to the truth, and up to a certain point you obeyed me. Then you ran off the rails. You attempted to make me believe that the diamonds were in Harry Rayburn's possession. At the time, I accepted your statement because it facilitated my task—the task of inducing you to decoy Harry Rayburn here. But, my dear Anne, the diamonds have been in my possession ever since I left the Falls—though I only discovered the fact yesterday."

"You know!" I gasped.

"It may interest you to hear that it was Pagett who gave the show away. He insisted on boring me with a long, pointless story about a wager and a tin of films. It didn't take me long to put two and two together—Mrs. Blair's distrust of Colonel Race, her agitation, her entreaty that I would take care of her souvenirs for her. The excellent Pagett had already unfastened the cases through an excess of zeal. Before leaving the hotel, I simply transferred all the rolls of films to my own pocket. They are in the corner there. I admit that I haven't had time to examine them yet, but I notice that one is of a totally different weight from the others, rattles in a peculiar fashion and has evidently been stuck down with a glue which will necessitate the use of a can-opener.

The case seems clear, does it not? And now, you see, I have you both nicely in the trap. . . . It's a pity that you didn't take kindly to the idea of becoming Lady Pedler."

I did not answer. I stood looking at him. There was the sound of feet on the stairs; the door was flung open, and Harry Rayburn was hustled into the room between two men. Sir Eustace flung me a look of triumph.

"According to plan!" he said softly. "You amateurs *will* pit yourselves against professionals!"

"What's the meaning of this?" cried Harry hoarsely.

"It means that you have walked into my parlor—said the spider to the fly," remarked Sir Eustace facetiously. "My dear Rayburn, you are extraordinarily unlucky!"

"You said I could come safely, Anne!"

"Do not reproach her, my dear fellow. That note was written at my dictation, and the lady could not help herself. She would have been wiser not to write it—but I did not tell her so at the time. You followed her instructions, went to the curio-shop, were taken through the secret passage from the back room—and found yourself in the hands of your enemies!"

HARRY looked at me. I understood his glance and edged nearer to Sir Eustace.

"Yes," murmured the latter, "decidedly you are not lucky! This is—let me see, the third encounter."

"You are right," said Harry. "This is the third encounter. Twice you have worsted me—have you never heard that the third time the luck changes? This is my round—Cover him, Anne."

I was all ready. In a flash I had whipped the pistol out of my stocking and was holding it to his head. The two men guarding Harry sprang forward, but his voice stopped them.

"Another step—and he dies! If they come any nearer, Anne, pull the trigger—don't hesitate."

"I sha'n't," I replied cheerfully. "I'm rather afraid of pulling it anyway."

I think Sir Eustace shared my fears. He was certainly shaking like a jelly.

"Stay where you are," he commanded, and the men stopped obediently.

"Tell them to leave the room," said Harry.

Sir Eustace gave the order. The men filed out, and Harry shot the bolt across the door behind them.

"Now we can talk," he observed grimly, and coming across the room, he took the revolver out of my hand.

Sir Eustace uttered a sigh of relief and wiped his forehead with a handkerchief.

"I'm shockingly out of condition," he observed. "I think I must have a weak heart. I am glad that revolver is in competent hands. I didn't trust Miss Anne with it. Well, my young friend, as you say, now we can talk. I'm willing to admit that you stole a march upon me. Where the devil that revolver came from I don't know. I had the girl's luggage searched when she arrived. And where did you produce it from now? You hadn't got it on you a minute ago?"

"Yes, I had," I replied. "It was in my stocking."

"I don't know enough about women. I ought to have studied them more," said Sir Eustace sadly. "I wonder if Pagett would have known that?"

Harry rapped sharply on the table.

"Don't play the fool. If it weren't for your gray hairs, I'd throw you out of the window. You damned scoundrel! Gray hairs, or no gray hairs, I—"

He advanced a step or two, and Sir Eustace skipped nimbly behind the table.

"The young are always so violent," he said reproachfully. "Unable to use their brains, they rely solely on their muscles. Let us talk sense. For the moment you have the upper hand. But that state of affairs cannot continue. The house is full of my men. You are hopelessly outnumbered. Your momentary ascendancy has been gained by an accident—"

"Has it?"

Something in Harry's voice, a grim railery, seemed to attract Sir Eustace's attention. He stared at him.

"Has it?" said Harry again. "Sit down, Sir Eustace, and listen to what I have to say." Still covering him with the revolver, he went on: "The cards are against you this time. To begin with, listen to *that*!"

That was a dull banging at the door below. There were shouts, oaths, and then a sound of firing. Sir Eustace paled.

"What's that?"

"Race—and his people. You didn't know, did you, Sir Eustace, that Anne had an arrangement with me by which we should know whether communications from

one to the other were genuine? Telegrams were to be signed 'Andy,' letters were to have the word *and* crossed out somewhere in them. Anne knew that your telegram was a fake. She came here of her own free will, walked deliberately into the snare, in the hope that she might catch you in your own trap. Before leaving Kimberley she wired both to me and to Race. Mrs. Blair has been in communication with us ever since. I received the letter written at your dictation, which was just what I expected. I had already discussed with Race the probabilities of a secret passage leading out of the curio-shop, and he had discovered the place where the exit was situated."

THERE was a screaming, tearing sound, and a heavy explosion which shook the room.

"They're shelling this part of the town. I must get you out of here, Anne."

A bright light flared up. The house opposite was on fire. Sir Eustace had risen and was pacing up and down. Harry kept him covered with the revolver.

"So you see, Sir Eustace, the game is up. It was you yourself who very kindly provided us with the clue of your whereabouts. Race's men were watching the exit of the secret passage. In spite of the precautions you took, they were successful in following me here."

Sir Eustace turned suddenly.

"Very clever—very creditable! But I've still a word to say. If I've lost the trick, so have you. You'll never be able to bring the murder of Nadina home to me. I was in Marlow on that day; that's all you've got against me. No one can prove that I even knew the woman. But *you* knew her; *you* had a motive for killing her—and your record's against you. You're a thief, remember, a thief. There's one thing you don't know, perhaps. *I've got the diamonds.* And here goes—"

With an incredibly swift movement, he stopped, swung up his arm and threw. There was a tinkle of breaking glass, as the object went through the window and disappeared into the blazing mass opposite.

"There goes your only hope of establishing your innocence over the Kimberley affair. And now we'll talk. I'll drive a bargain with you. You've got me cornered. Race will find all he needs in this house. There's a chance for me if I can get away.

I'm done for if I stay—but so are you, young man. There's a skylight in the next room. A couple of minutes' start, and I shall be all right. I've got one or two little arrangements already made. You let me out that way, and give me a start—and I leave you a signed confession that I killed Nadina."

"Yes, Harry," I cried. "Yes, yes, yes!" He turned a stern face on me.

"No, Anne, a thousand times no. You don't know what you're saying."

"I do. It solves everything."

"I'd never be able to look Race in the face again. I'll take my chance—but I'm damned if I'll let this slippery old fox get away. It's no good, Anne. I won't do it."

Sir Eustace chuckled. He accepted defeat without the least emotion.

"Well, well," he remarked, "you seem to have met your master, Anne. But I can assure you both that moral rectitude does not always pay."

THERE was a crash of rending wood, and footsteps surged up the stairs. Harry drew back the bolt. Colonel Race was the first to enter the room. His face lit up at the sight of us.

"You're safe, Anne. I was afraid—" He turned to Sir Eustace. "I've been after you for a long time, Pedler—and at last I've got you."

"Everybody seems to have gone completely mad," declared Sir Eustace airily. "These young people have been threatening me with revolvers and accusing me of the most shocking things. I don't know what it's all about."

"Don't you? It means that I've found the Colonel. It means that on January 8th last, you were not at Cannes, but at Marlow. It means that when your tool, Madam Nadina, turned against you, you planned to do away with her—and at last we shall be able to bring the crime home to you."

"Indeed? And from whom did you get all this interesting information? From the man who is even now being looked for by the police? His evidence will be very valuable."

"We have other evidence. There is some one else who knew that Nadina was going to meet you at the Mill House."

Sir Eustace looked surprised. Colonel Race made a gesture with his hand. Arthur Minks, alias the Reverend Edward

Chichester, alias Miss Pettigrew, stepped forward. He was pale and nervous, but he spoke clearly enough.

"I saw Nadina in Paris the night before she went over to England. I was posing at the time as a Russian count. She told me of her purpose. I warned her, knowing what kind of man she had to deal with, but she did not take my advice. There was a wireless message on the table. I read it. Afterward I thought I would have a try for the diamonds myself. In Johannesburg, Mr. Rayburn accosted me. He persuaded me to come over to his side."

Sir Eustace looked at him. Minks seemed visibly to wilt.

"Rats always leave a sinking ship," observed Sir Eustace. "I don't care for rats. Sooner or later, I destroy vermin."

"There's just one thing I'd like to tell you, Sir Eustace," I remarked. "That tin you threw out of the window didn't contain the diamonds. It had common pebbles in it. The diamonds are in a perfectly safe place. As a matter of fact, they're in the big giraffe's stomach. Suzanne hollowed it out, put the diamonds in with cotton wool, so that they wouldn't rattle, and plugged it up again."

Sir Eustace looked at me for some time. His reply was characteristic.

"I always did hate that blinking giraffe," he said. "It must have been instinct."

CHAPTER XXXIV

WE were not able to return to Johannesburg that night. The shells were coming over pretty fast, and I gathered that we were now more or less cut off, owing to the rebels having obtained possession of a new part of the suburbs.

Our place of refuge was a farm some twenty miles or so from Johannesburg—right out on the veldt. I was dropping with fatigue. All the excitement and anxiety of the last two days had left me little better than a limp rag.

I kept repeating to myself, without being able to believe it, that our troubles were really over. Harry and I were together, and we should never be separated again. Yet all through I was conscious of some barrier between us—a constraint on his part, the reason of which I could not fathom.

Sir Eustace had been driven off in an

opposite direction accompanied by a strong guard. He waved his hand airily to us on departing.

I came out onto the *stoep* early on the following morning and looked across the veldt in the direction of Johannesburg. I could see the great dumps glistening in the pale morning sunshine, and I could hear the low rumbling mutter of the guns. The rebellion was not over yet.

The farmer's wife came out and called me in to breakfast. She was a kind, motherly soul, and I was already very fond of her. Harry had gone out at dawn and had not yet returned, so she informed me. Again I felt a stir of uneasiness pass over me. What was this shadow of which I was so conscious between us?

AFTER breakfast I sat out on the *stoep*, a book in my hand which I did not read. I was so lost in my own thoughts that I never saw Colonel Race ride up and dismount from his horse. It was not until he said, "Good morning, Anne," that I became aware of his presence.

"Oh," I said with a flush, "it's you."

"Yes. May I sit down?"

He drew a chair up beside me. It was the first time we had been alone together since that day at the Matoppos. As always, I felt that curious mixture of fascination and fear that he never failed to inspire in me.

"What is the news?" I asked.

"Smuts will be in Johannesburg tomorrow. I give this outbreak three days more before it collapses utterly. In the meantime the fighting goes on."

"I wish," I said, "that one could be sure that the right people were the ones to get killed—I mean the ones who wanted to fight, not just all the poor people who happen to live in the parts where the fighting is going on."

He nodded.

"I know what you mean, Anne. That's the unfairness of war. But I've other news for you."

"Yes?"

"A confession of incompetency on my part. Pedler has managed to escape."

"What?"

"Yes. No one knows how he managed it. He was securely locked up for the night, in an upper-story room of one of the farms roundabout which the military have taken over, but this morning the room was empty and the bird had flown."

SECRETLY I was rather pleased. Never, to this day, have I been able to rid myself of a sneaking fondness for Sir Eustace. I dare say it's reprehensible, but there it is. I admire him. He was a thorough-going villain, I dare say—but he was a pleasant one. I've never met anyone half so amusing since.

I concealed my feelings, of course. Naturally, Colonel Race would feel quite differently about it. He wanted Sir Eustace brought to justice. There was nothing very surprising in his escape, when one came to think of it. All round Jo'burg he must have innumerable spies and agents. And whatever Colonel Race might think, I was exceedingly doubtful that they would ever catch him. He probably had a well-planned line of retreat. Indeed, he had said as much to us.

I expressed myself suitably, though in a rather lukewarm manner, and the conversation languished. Then Colonel Race asked suddenly for Harry. I told him that he had gone off at dawn and that I hadn't seen him this morning.

"You understand, don't you, Anne, that apart from formalities, he is completely cleared? There are technicalities, of course, but Sir Eustace's guilt is well assured. There is nothing now to keep you apart."

He said this without looking at me, in a slow, jerky voice.

"I understand," I said gratefully.

"And there is no reason why he should not at once resume his real name."

"No—of course not."

"You know his real name?"

The question surprised me.

"Of course I do. Harry Lucas."

He did not answer, and something in the quality of his silence struck me as peculiar.

"Anne, do you remember that as we drove home from the Matoppos that day, I told you that I knew what I had to do?"

"Of course I remember."

"I think that I may fairly say I have done it. The man you love is cleared of suspicion."

"Was that what you meant?"

"Of course."

I hung my head, ashamed of the baseless suspicion I had entertained. He spoke again in a thoughtful voice.

"When I was a mere youngster, I was in love with a girl who jilted me. After that, I thought only of my work. My

career meant everything to me. Then I met you, Anne—and all that seemed worth nothing. But youth calls to youth. . . . I've still got my work."

I was silent, I suppose one can't really love two men at once—but you can feel like it. The magnetism of this man was very great. I looked up at him suddenly.

"I think that you'll go very far," I said dreamily. "I think that you've got a great career ahead of you. You'll be one of the world's big men."

I felt as though I was uttering a prophecy.

"I shall be alone, though."

"All the people who do really big things are."

He took my hand, and said in a low voice:

"I'd rather have had—the other."

Then Harry came striding round the corner of the house. Colonel Race rose.

"Good morning—Lucas," he said.

For some reason Harry flushed up to the roots of his hair.

"Yes," I said gayly. "You must be known by your real name now."

But Harry was still staring at Colonel Race.

"So you know, sir!" he said at last.

"I never forget a face. I saw you once as a boy."

"What's all this about?" I asked, puzzled, looking from one to the other. It seemed a conflict of wills between them. Race won. Harry turned slightly away.

"I suppose you're right, sir. Tell her my real name."

"Anne, this isn't Harry Lucas. Harry Lucas was killed in the war. This is John Harold Eardsley."

CHAPTER XXXV

WITH his last words, Colonel Race had swung away and left us. I stood staring after him. Harry's voice recalled me to myself.

"Anne, forgive me, say you forgive me."

He took my hand in his, and almost mechanically I drew it away.

"Why did you deceive me?"

"I don't know that I can make you understand. I was afraid of all that sort of thing—the power and fascination of wealth. I wanted you to care for me just for myself—for the man I was, without ornaments and trappings."

"You mean you didn't trust me?"

"You can put it that way if you like—but it isn't quite true. I'd become embittered, suspicious—and it was so wonderful to be cared for in the way you cared for me."

"I see," I said slowly. I was going over in my own mind the story he had told me. For the first time I noted discrepancies in it which I had disregarded—an assurance of money, the power to buy back the diamonds of Nadina, the way in which he had preferred to speak of both men from the point of view of an outsider. And when he had said "my friend," he had meant not Eardsley, but Lucas. It was Lucas, the quiet fellow, who had loved Nadina so deeply.

"How did it come about?" I asked.

"We were both reckless—anxious to get killed. One night we exchanged identification disks—for luck! Lucas was killed the next day—blown to pieces."

I shuddered.

"But why didn't you tell me now? This morning? You couldn't have doubted my caring for you by this time?"

"Anne, I didn't want to spoil it all. I wanted to take you back to the island. What's the good of money? It can't buy happiness. We'd have been happy on the island. I tell you, I'm afraid of that other life—it nearly rotted me through once."

"Did Sir Eustace know who you really were?"

"Oh, yes."

"And Carton?"

"No. He saw us both with Nadina at Kimberley one night, but he didn't know which was which. He accepted my statement that I was Lucas, and Nadina was deceived by his cable. She was never afraid of Lucas. He was a quiet chap—very deep. But I always had the devil's own temper. She'd have been scared out of her life if she'd known that I'd come to life again."

"Harry, if Colonel Race hadn't told me, what did you mean to do?"

"Say nothing. Go on as Lucas."

"And your father's millions?"

"Race was welcome to them. Anyway, he would make a better use of them than I ever shall. Anne, what are you thinking about? You're frowning so."

"I'm thinking," I said slowly, "that I almost wish Colonel Race hadn't made you tell me."

"No, he was right. I owed you the truth."

He paused, then said suddenly:

"You know, Anne, I'm jealous of Race. He loves you too—and he's a bigger man than I am or ever shall be."

I turned to him, laughing.

"Harry, you idiot! It's you I want—and that's all that matters."

As soon as possible we started for Capetown. There Suzanne was waiting to greet me, and we disemboweled the big giraffe together. When the rebellion was finally quelled Colonel Race came down to Capetown, and at his suggestion the big villa at Muizenberg that had belonged to Sir Laurence Eardsley was reopened and we all took up our abode in it.

There we made our plans. I was to return to England with Suzanne and to be married from her house in London. And the trousseau was to be bought in Paris! Suzanne enjoyed planning all these details enormously. So did I. And yet the future seemed curiously unreal. Sometimes, without knowing why, I felt absolutely stifled, as though I couldn't breathe.

IT was the night before we were to sail. I couldn't sleep—I was miserable, and I didn't know why. I hated leaving Africa. When I came back to it, would it be the same thing? Would it ever be the same thing again?

And then I was startled by an authoritative rap on the shutter. I sprang up. Harry was on the *stoep* outside.

"Put some clothes on, Anne, and come out. I want to speak to you."

I huddled into a few garments, and stepped out into the cool night air—still and scented, with its velvety feel. Harry beckoned me out of earshot of the house. His face looked pale and determined, and his eyes were blazing.

"Anne, do you remember saying to me once that women enjoyed doing the things they disliked for the sake of some one they liked?"

"Yes," I said, wondering what was coming.

He caught me in his arms.

"Anne, come away with me—now, tonight. Back to Rhodesia—back to the island. I can't stand all this tomfoolery. I can't wait for you any longer."

"And what about my French frocks?" I lamented mockingly.

To this day, Harry never knows when I'm in earnest, and when I'm only teasing him.

"Damn your French frocks. I'm not going to let you go, do you hear? You're my woman. If I let you go away, I may lose you. I'm never sure of you. You're coming with me now—tonight—and damn everybody!"

He held me to him, kissing me until I could hardly breathe.

"I can't do without you any longer, Anne. I can't indeed. I hate all this money. Let Race have it. Come on. Let's go."

"My toothbrush?" I demurred.

"You can buy one. I know I'm a lunatic, but for God's sake, *come!*"

He stalked off at a furious pace. I followed him as meekly as the Barotsi woman I had observed at the Falls. Only I wasn't carrying a frying-pan on my head. He walked so fast that it was very difficult to keep up with him.

"Harry." I said at last, in a meek voice, "are we going to walk all the way to Rhodesia?"

He turned suddenly, and with a great shout of laughter gathered me in his arms.

"I'm mad, sweetheart, I know it. But I do love you so."

"We're a couple of lunatics. And oh, Harry, you never asked me, but I'm not making a sacrifice at all! I *wanted* to come!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

THAT was two years ago. We still live on the island. Before me, on the rough wooden table, is the letter that Suzanne wrote me at the time.

"Dear Babes in the Wood—dear Lunatics in Love:

"I'm not surprised—not at all. All the time we'd been talking Paris and frocks, I felt that it wasn't a bit real—that you'd vanish into the blue some day to be married over the tongs in the good old gypsy fashion. But you *are* a couple of lunatics. This idea of renouncing a vast fortune is absurd. Colonel Race wanted to argue the matter, but I have persuaded him to leave the argument to time. He can administer the estate for Harry—and none better. Because after all, honeymoons don't last forever—you're not here, Anne, so I can safely say that without having you fly out at me like a little wildcat. Love in the wilderness will last a good while, but one

day you will suddenly begin to dream of houses in Park Lane, sumptuous furs, Paris frocks, the largest thing in motors and the latest thing in perambulators, French maids and Norland nurses! Oh, yes, you will.

"But have your honeymoon, dear lunatics, and let it be a long one. And think of me sometimes, comfortably putting on weight amid the fleshpots!

"Your loving friend Suzanne Blair."

There is another letter that I sometimes read. It came a good while ago after the other and was accompanied by a bulky packet. It appeared to be written from somewhere in Bolivia.

"My dear Anne Beddingfeld:

"I can't resist writing to you, not so much for the pleasure it gives me to write, as for the enormous pleasure I know it will give you to hear from me. Our friend Race wasn't quite as clever as he thought himself, was he?

"I think I shall appoint you my literary executor. I'm sending you my diary. There's nothing in it that would interest Race and his crowd, but I fancy that there are passages in it which may amuse you. Make use of it in any way you like. I suggest an article for the *Daily Budget*—'Criminals I Have Met.' I only stipulate that I shall be the central figure.

"By this time I have no doubt that you are no longer Anne Beddingfeld, but Lady Eardsley, queening it in Park Lane. I should just like to say that I bear you no malice whatever. It would be hard, of course, to have to begin all over again at my time of life, but, *entre nous*, I had a little reserve fund carefully put aside for such a contingency. It has come in very usefully, and I am getting along well.

"On the whole, I think I have displayed a most Christian and forgiving spirit. Even to Pagett! I happened to hear that he—or rather Mrs. Pagett—had brought a sixth child into the world the other day. England will be entirely populated by Pagetts soon. I sent the child a silver mug, and on a postcard declared my willingness to act as godfather. I can see Pagett taking both mug and postcard straight to Scotland Yard without a smile on his face!

"Bless your liquid eyes. Some day you will see what a mistake you have made in not marrying me.

"Yours ever,
"Eustace Pedler."

HARRY was furious. It is the one point on which he and I do not see eye to eye. To him, Sir Eustace was the man who tried to murder me and whom he regards as responsible for the death of his friend. Sir Eustace's attempts on my life have always puzzled me. They are not in the picture, so to speak. For I am sure he always had a genuinely kindly feeling toward me.

Then why did he twice attempt to take my life? Harry says "because he's a damned scoundrel" and seems to think that settles the matter. Suzanne was more discriminating. I talked it over with her, and she put it down to a "fear complex." Suzanne goes in rather for psycho-analysis. She pointed out to me that Sir Eustace's whole life was actuated by a desire to be safe and comfortable. He had an acute sense of self-preservation. And the murder of Nadina removed certain inhibitions. His actions did not represent the state of his feeling toward me, but were the result of his acute fears for his own safety. I think Suzanne is right. As for Nadina, she was the kind of woman who deserved to die. Men do all sorts of questionable things in order to get rich, but women shouldn't pretend to be in love when they aren't.

I can forgive Sir Eustace easily enough, but I shall never forgive Nadina. Never!

The other day I was unpacking some tins that were wrapped in bits of an old *Daily Budget*, and I suddenly came upon the words: "The Man in the Brown Suit." How long ago it seemed! I had, of course, severed my connection with the *Daily Budget* long ago—I had done with it sooner than it had done with me. "MY ROMANTIC WEDDING" was given a halo of publicity.

My son is lying in the sun, kicking his legs. There's a "man in a brown suit" if you like. He's wearing as little as possible, which is the best costume for Africa, and is as brown as a berry. He's always burrowing in the earth. I think he takes after Papa. He'll have that same mania for Pliocene clay. Suzanne sent me a cable when he was born.

"Congratulations and love to the latest arrival on Lunatics' Island. Is his head dolichocephalic or brachycephalic?"

I wasn't going to stand that from Suzanne. I sent her a reply of one word, economical and to the point:

"Platycephalic!"



Black-Nose

The man who wrote "The Tusker and the Vampires" here contributes a memorable story of a South American puma. (N. B: He knows what he's writing about.)

By HUGH THOMASON

IN the water-logged forest of northern Amazonas, where he was born, and in the highlands that border the valley of the Rio Negro, to which he migrated soon after he had passed from his mother's charge, he was the handsomest thing in the jungle depths, and he knew it. From whiskers to the end of his tail, he stretched eight feet of tawny silkiness, and the perfection of his hide concealed muscles like steel. Unlike the lion and tiger, and his cousin the North American puma, he was mainly silent, except when he sprang at a peccary or struck down a dog in a native settlement—his two chief forms of food. And unlike the larger cats, he was at home among trees; in the half-flooded depths of the river forests of his youth he had lived in the trees; and often, when he was fully grown, he would sleep on the flat surface of a branch after a meal, rather than descend to the damp ground.

For he was dainty in his ways, was Black-nose, as if he knew that such beauty as his deserved great care. His name came to him from the fact that his nose was as black as a crow's wing from its tip to his

under eyelashes. He found a mate, dainty and nice in her habits as himself, and there was a time in his life when their two cubs were matter for such pride as he had never known before. He would hunt for them, bring to the lair young peccary, and agouti, and even fish, because the panther family loved fish as much as do any of the cat tribe. And when the family was full-fed, Black-nose would romp with them out in the open away from the trees, indulging in boxing-matches with his wife, or nuzzling the satiny little things that were more like kittens than puma cubs in their early days. Life went easily, there away from men, for Black-nose and his family lived in the *sertao*, which those who know Brazil will understand.

El sertao is the heart of Brazil, the land of mystery; the term stands for the undiscovered land, the place where no man comes. It is a land that shrinks away as civilization advances, a little world of which the frontiers recede year by year as a railway is laid or a settlement is built on the edge of the wild. Old hunters, returning to the towns, will simply say "*sertao*"

if asked where they have been, and that may mean anywhere between Sao Paulo and the Rio Negro. It is, simply, the place where man has not yet broken in on the rule of Nature. It is a place where a man may wander for days, seeing nothing except the forest foliage, yet never free from the inspection of invisible eyes among the treetops, in the undergrowth, peering from behind tree-trunks, ever watchful and ever invisible. This is the *sertao*.

IN this land, which has no fixed boundaries and no laws but that of the survival of the fittest, Black-nose lived and flourished. He would lie, apparently dozing, for half a day on a branch over a swamp, to drop at last on the back of a peccary, which he would kill with one wrench of his great paws, breaking the wild pig's neck—peccary meat was toothsome and tender, good to gnaw at and take home to the cubs. Or he would lie beside a river-bank, as still as the undergrowth which intruded to the very edge of the water, until one swish would land him a fish—just as a *hors d'œuvre* before a meal, or dessert after. Fishing was more sport than earnest to Black-nose, for one catch never meant a full meal. . . .

The family was not half-grown when the Mapoches, wandering from an old village to found a new one, settled within a mile of Black-nose's lair. It is the way of the puma of South America never to attack man, if the records of travelers are to be believed, and however that may be, when the Mapoches came on the scene, Black-nose moved on. He took his splendid mate and the half-grown cubs north and east. They came to a land where peccary was scarce, and moved on farther still. Once Black-nose, sniffing as they traveled, got the scent of a dog, and dog is to his kind little less to be sought than is peccary; but he lost the scent again, and the family moved north and east, into the wind. Instinct told Black-nose that in traveling it is always best to move into the wind, because thus one gets warning of danger ahead, and early scent of food.

Thus traveling, the four of them—Black-nose, his mate and the two cubs—came to the bank of a stream fifteen or twenty yards wide, and since the cubs were tired, they stayed there to drink and rest. Black-nose went first down to the water's edge and lapped his fill. He saw a ruffling of the water's surface, like fishes at play, out in

midstream, but he had fed heavily the night before, and was in no mood for fishing. He went back to the spot where the family had chosen to camp, and lay down, licking himself luxuriously and quite prepared for a sleep, while his mate took the two cubs to the water's edge.

A sudden roar brought him to his feet, and set him off for the river-bank like a streak of lightning. There he saw his mate whining helplessly, with blood running down her torn muzzle; in the stream one cub struggled and mewd—and all that was left of the other was a welter of blood. Black-nose went to the edge of the stream, and something leaped up at him and snapped viciously, missing his muzzle by the fraction of an inch.

He wanted to go to the rescue of his cubs, but there is an instinct in the things of the wild which tells them when a quest is quite hopeless. Although Black-nose had never encountered *perai* before, he realized that this was a hopeless quest, and the cubs were doomed. Even as he stood, the second cub disappeared beneath the water. The eddies where it went down were like a whirlpool, as the great, fierce fish fought for a bite at the prey.

THUS Black-nose made the acquaintance of *perai*, the fiercest, most blood-thirsty fish in the world, and ever afterward he was cautious of what deep water might hold, as if the lesson of the cubs had sunk into his brain. It was a wise caution, for a shoal of *perai* will drag down a colt from the banks of the rivers these pests inhabit, tearing it to pieces and leaving nothing but bones in a matter of minutes. In all the jungle there is nothing to compare with the *perai* for swiftness and ferocity, and Black-nose went back sadly to lick the wound on his mate's muzzle—since she could not get at it herself—and wail, at times, for the lost cubs.

He was wakened that night by a troop of monkeys chattering in the trees overhead—or it may have been that he lay awake, since it is the habit of his kind to wake more by night than by day. However that may have been, he was up in the trees and after the monkeys before they knew of his presence—he was out of the puma country here, and the presence of his kind was new to the monkeys. One good leap and a well-judged blow from his paw brought down a big fellow whom Black-nose had paralyzed from action by a sharp cry, and almost

before the lifeless monkey had reached the ground, Black-nose's teeth were at his throat. His mate joined him, and they fed full from the carcass, leaving little but head and bones at the end of their meal. Then they slept, long and heavily, among almost impenetrable thorn; it would have been impenetrable to man, but these two found a way into its heart with scarcely a scratch.

The sun was low when Black-nose awakened again, yawned, and licked his mate's sore muzzle where the *perai* had snapped at her. The sharp fish teeth had bitten a piece clean out from her silky face, and the wound must be kept clean, lest flies should poison it and cause festering. Thus Black-nose cleansed it, licking gently, lest his rasplike tongue should do less good than harm. Next he sat up and washed himself with that same tongue, while his mate performed a like toilet on herself; and then for a little time they played just as kittens might, rolling over and over, a mass of fur among which two tails waved, or springing at each other to fall with a thud on the ground, striking out with hind paws and claspings each other with fore paws. Thus until Black-nose's mate suddenly sat apart from him, quite still, and whined piteously. She had remembered the lost cubs; and at that, Black-nose ceased playing.

They went back to the river's bank, and drank cautiously. The *perai* had gone for the time, hunting elsewhere, and Black-nose knew it was time for him and his mate to go too, for the waters holding such tornadoes of ferocity as these fish could not hold peccary as well. It was all very well hunting monkey, but the second monkey would be more wary than the first, since that kind of beast is wiser even than Black-nose and his breed; and the third would be more difficult than the second, and so on in endless progression. Like all his tribe, Black-nose was lazy; he liked his food to come easily, and though monkey had a fine flavor, peccary was far less trouble to catch.

IT may have been the loss of the cubs, or the change of wind, or mere caprice, that made him alter his course. For a little way he went that night along the bank of the stream where the *perai* lived, and the absence of tracks to the water's edge might have told him that the things of the wild feared this stream, had he been given to reflection on the laws of cause and effect.

At less than a mile upstream he turned away to the west again, and suddenly paused. Faint, and very far away—too far and faint for any human ear to hear—a dog howled. Black-nose nuzzled his mate affectionately, and they traveled toward the howl. In a hundred yards or less a man would have lost all direction in the trackless bush, but Black-nose held on unerringly, needing no second howl to tell him the line of travel. Dog was good, very good; and as a rule, dog was easy meat, unless the hunter disturbed the dog's master, and thus made trouble for himself.

THE moon was near on its setting when Black-nose became aware of the smell of smoke; a faint wind lay athwart his course, and the smoke came out a little way from the fire that caused it, to meet him and his mate. At that they traveled very warily, and in a little time Black-nose took to the trees, for the scent of the dog mixed in with that of the smoke, and he would not go back. In with those two scents, too, was mixed that of the being which, 'tis said, no puma attacks. But Black-nose had grown very hungry since his meal of monkey, and he had an idea that it would be possible to spy out the land from the trees, in case dog were handy for a kill.

Here the experience of his early years stood him in good stead. As a growing cub, he had lived for days at a time in the middle terraces of the jungle, up over the dark, still waters which slopped around the boles of age-old, crowding trees, and now he went silently as a shadow some thirty feet above the ground, clawing a way from branch to branch, and ever nearing the source of the howl that started him on this trail. His mate, up in the branches with him, suddenly stopped and crouched. Perhaps, in their silent language, Black-nose told her that this was work for one and no more; and perhaps she knew, without his telling, that only the limit of caution would mean dog for dinner. In any case, she lay close to the surface of a stout bough, and waited while Black-nose went on alone.

He found, beneath and a little before him, a half-dozen of strange lairs, and even at that distance they smelt strongly of that being which the puma befriends, if travelers' tales be true. It was a strong, disagreeable smell to Black-nose, for these were Aracona Indians, some of the lowest and least cleanly of the tribes that roam the wastes of Amazonas. But streaked

with that offensive smell was the scent of the dog; and Black-nose's eyes, more attuned to night than to day, showed him the thing he had come to find, lying with its head on its paws beside the biggest of the rude huts where the Aracona slept.

The clearing in which these huts were placed was but twenty yards across, and on every side the boughs of the forest giants overhung. Black-nose circled about the little encampment until he had come to where one bough jutted out toward the dog, and gathered himself for the effort. His tail waved silently, his back rippled as he judged the distance; and then, with one short roar he launched himself straight and true, landing full on the sleeping dog. The roar, which his kind make to paralyze their prey in the last moments of the hunt, was not merely unnecessary in this case—it was injudicious; for a dozen or more of the dirty beings who had owned the dog rushed into the open, to see a flying shape in the shadows. Before they could think of getting weapons, the silence settled again around them. Black-nose made no mistakes in his hunting; the jungle-dweller who makes mistakes does not live to make many.

BLACK-NOSE and his mate dined sparingly. The dog was lean and not overlarge. It was much to their taste, but when it was all gone, even to the head and the tail, Black-nose sat up and licked his lips disconsolately. One dog between two pumas is little more than an appetizer, and apparently the Aracona camp held no more dogs. As a matter of fact, the Aracona had moved up here after fighting with some distant relatives of theirs in puma country, and others had been before Black-nose in the hunt for dog-meat; this was the last one left.

It wanted barely an hour to dawn now. Black-nose got up from his haunches and made for water, being thirsty after the long trail and the kill. He did not search for water, but made straight for it without searching. Water has its own smell, as much as has dog or peccary, and thus with his mate he went straight to where the reeds grew rank and the grass was thick and tangled, and paw-marks remained in the sodden earth at every step between the grass-tufts. He sniffed, cautiously—the picture of the *perai* was imprinted somewhere in his brain—and then lapped as his mate came down to the edge of the stream beside him.

Out in the dark waters something moved. Black-nose raised his head and stared at it. A tail waved slowly, lazily, and Black-nose's mate, who had by far the lesser share of the dog, roared and leaped—it would not be the first time she had struck water for peccary. She landed on something in which her claws would scarcely sink, something tremendous in size, leathery, strange—something which raised a vast pair of jaws and gripped her with terrible teeth just behind the shoulder, while, as if she were merely a fly on its back, it described dizzy circles in the water. Unknowingly, she had dug one of her sharp claws into an Alligator's eye, her first mistake in hunting—and as is the way of the jungle, her last.

It was a titanic struggle, a battle of the jungle's strongest, but it could have only one end. The female puma's struggles grew fainter as the great jaws steadily closed in behind her shoulder, crushing out the breath as the bones gave way under the strain. She made a last fierce snap, and tore away the skin from the neck of the reptile, and then with a ripple of muscle collapsed, limp and dying. With one eye torn out, the thing that held her dived, taking her with him to the depths.

Black-nose, alone on the bank, stared and whined uselessly. The time of their parting had been near, but instinct made him long for his mate, as yet, and he stood widowed there in the dawn. Not until the last streak of blood had gone downstream, the last bubble had come up from the scene of the great fight, did he turn away to find a branch on which he might lie, still half-hungry, to sleep out the day. He was too near the Aracona camp to trust the ground for his sleeping-place, too weary to travel farther from the camp.

SMELL and sound mixing with his dreams gradually awakened him. It was just on sunset again, and he felt empty after the light meal of the preceding night—felt, too, a sense of loss, and looked around slowly, to realize that he was utterly alone. If he had forgotten the loss of the cubs, since memories are very short in the wild, he had not yet forgotten that his beautiful mate was no longer with him. He lay quite still with his head on his paws.

Again the noises and the smell that had wakened him came up to the branch where he lay; a herd of peccary, rooting and hunting in the forest, had swung in his di-

rection so that the wind brought the scent his way a second time, and he could hear, very faintly, how they grunted and chuckled as they sought their food. Black-nose sat up on the branch and yawned, bestowed a couple of licks on his flank, and moved off, as noiseless as a shadow, in the direction of the scent.

As when he sought the Aracona dog, he kept to the branches, and moved very warily. He did not go straight, but circled in the middle terrace of the trees until the wind brought the scent of the peccary straight down to him, for he knew that these beasts, like himself, had keen noses, and once they scented him, the hunt would be hopeless. Thus he got down-wind of them, and moved up toward them cautiously, keeping himself hid when he was in sight of them, and on seeing their noses pointed toward him, he crouched to the branch that held him and kept still, mixing in with the mottled surface of the bark, so that he was like a part of the tree itself rather than a separate thing.

There he lay, watching. The ungainly beasts down on the ground came toward him, rooting down by the trunks of trees, turning over dead leaves, gobbling up insects with decaying vegetable stuff. With his customary short roar, Black-nose leaped down, and as his weight bore one of the herd to the ground, its companions scattered with frightened snorts, and fled. Black-nose gave one wrench with his paws at the neck of the beast he bestrode, and as it dropped dead and limp beneath him, sank his teeth in its neck and drank freely.

He left half a carcass buried in the earth. It is the custom of his kind, which buries the uneaten prey—and scarcely ever returns to it for a second meal. At the river-bank he drank appreciatively and easily, a gorged and comfortable puma, and then he climbed to sleep again. There was nothing now for him but food and sleep, nobody to play with.

MANUEL BLANCO, hunter, heard a slight rustle in the foliage as he lay awake, and rose to see if he could trace the cause. A brilliant moon lighted the thinned patches of the trees, and here and there a little beam filtered down to the jungle floor, for on this comparatively high ground the woodland growth was less dense than down by the river. Manuel looked about him, and toward the moon he saw on a branch a bulge that was not wood. He

stole slowly toward the bulge, his rifle gripped and ready.

He got the branch clear between him and the moon, and on it there showed a magnificent puma form, a tawny duskiness in the moonlight. Manuel, not daring to approach nearer, raised his rifle, knelt and took careful aim. The report awakened a thousand echoes in the aisles of the forest, and when the thin wisp of smoke cleared, the branch was free of its burden. Manuel hurried forward, hoping for that splendid pelt, but there was no sign of the puma on the ground under the tree, nor any indication of its having fallen. Manuel stood musing for a minute or two, wondering—he was usually such a sure shot—and then returned to his camp, empty-handed.

A COUPLE of miles away Black-nose paused in his flight. The roar and the flash were like nothing that he had ever seen or heard of before, and he was scared, puzzled. The country about him was strange; somewhere down under him peccary grunted, but he was in no mood for peccary. He scratched at his ear with his paw, for that ear stung intolerably. He did not know it, but his beauty was marred by a hole clean through the ear near its tip, where Manuel's bullet had passed. All he knew was that the paw with which he had scratched the ear had blood on it, and he licked that off and scratched again. In the end he rubbed the wounded ear against the bole of the tree that held him, but that was too painful, and he caressed the wound gently with the pad of his paw.

From somewhere in the wild a scent came up to him, a smell that to man would have been loathsome, but to him was the scent of home. It was uncovered mud and rotting leaves, monkey-trail and agouti, all mixed in so as to make one big smell. It brought back to Black-nose the knowledge rather than the memory of the half-flooded land in which he had been born, the country in which his mother had cuffed and licked him into full pumahood, where, if game were not so plentiful, still, the land was free of fierce fish that tore cubs to pieces, and strange things that flashed and roared and stung so terribly—a land that man never traversed. He sat up, in the excitement of that scent forgetting his wounded ear. Then he dropped from his tree to the ground, turned his nose to the southwest, and set out on his long journey toward the old home.



Three Feet of Fire

This spirited tale of a Swede, an Irishman and a forest fire is by the author of "The Florida Kid" and "Wooden Weapons."

By CHARLES HORN

THE doorway of the cabin of Harden, the forest ranger, was filled up by the big man. One knew that he was a Swede, even before one caught the rolling intonations of his speech.

"Hi!" he called. "How you be, eh?"

"Fine." Harden was busy with a report, but looked up from the battered desk, and his eyes lighted as he saw the big man.

"Hello, Ole! Back again, eh? Where's McMurray?"

Ole motioned vaguely over a shoulder.

"Aw, aroun' outside with the jackasses, all right. Ay tank Ay have my fire-permit, now."

Harden dipped two fingers into a pigeon-hole, drew forth a small book of yellow blanks and held a poised pencil.

"For how long?" he asked.

"Aw, two-three mont', I gass. About reg'lar tam, I tank."

Filling out the leaf, Harden tore it from the book and handed it to the Swede.

"Where to, this time, Ole? I've made it out for the upper Santa Ana. Is that all right?"

"Yas. I tank the Sonty Onny, all right.

One tam las' year, when Pat was up Coon Crick, he find big hole that had been timbered oop. It look good, all right. Ay see soom color in the dump, all right. Ay tank mabbe we mek big strike, dis tam."

From outside the cabin came the strident voice of another man.

"Shtay put, ye devil-beastes! Oi'll bate yer dommed heads off!"

Ole grinned. "Pat, he have a hal of a tam with them jackasses."

"Sit down," Harden invited, then flashed a smile to the corner where I sat in a tipped-backed chair. "Haven't forgotten Rule Six, have you, Ole?" he asked.

The Swede looked up quickly and in a little bewilderment.

"Rule Sax?" he asked. "Rule—oh, Ay tank you mean about puttin'—"

Harden nodded. "Yes. 'When you find a fire burning, put it out.' Haven't found any fires to put out for two or three years, have you?"

"No," Ole admitted. "But you can't tal about—"

Harden interrupted again by turning to me.

"It's like giving shooting instructions to marksmen," he explained, "this issuing fire-permits to Ole and Pat. They've been prospecting in the San Bernardinos ever since the mountains grew, I guess, but regulations are regulations.

"Rule Six," he went on, "is a standing joke between Ole, Pat and me. It's on one of the little cards that the Forest Service sticks up on trees to impress the campers with the importance of fire-prevention in the big woods. About seventy-five per cent of our brush-fires and forest-fires are due to carelessness, and these cards have simple rules outlined—Rule Six, for instance, urges that everyone put out a fire they may find left by another camper.

"Two years ago, Ole and Pat found such a fire, and the putting out of it has become one of the tales of the mountain. It was like this:"

And because this is a tale of the mountains, and of a sixty-minute fight with fire, and a three-minute fight between two huge men, and because it was told to me that afternoon in the pure Americanese of Harden, in the Swede-Americanese of Ole, and the Irish-Americanese of Pat, it can be best narrated after this manner:

THAT particular summer was one of the dryest in twenty years. The foliage of the towering pines and firs and cedars was a huge potential torch, awaiting but the leaping tongue of the tiniest match. The creeks were dried up on more than half their lengths, and most of them were running only in the night and early morning. Above the Mill Creek road but one creek, Barton, flowed into the Santa Ana. One raised a tremendous dust when one walked across the grass or through the brush. The dried grass—sleeping tinder, it was—crackled and snapped beneath one's heels. The deer and bobcats and lions, and all the lesser animals, were seeking the high places, up near the source of the waters. Four or five sweeping fires had denuded a great portion of the crest country, and had been controlled only after many weary hours had been spent by hundreds of men.

Added to all this was the intense heat in the valleys. San Bernardino had registered 112 degrees; Redlands unwillingly told of 110 degrees; other cities fared in like manner. And of a certainty this sent hundreds, thousands into the mountains. Men brought their families away from the heat of the valleys, and with a tent and supplies

left their dependents at places that were cooled with great altitude. The men then went back to their tasks. On Saturday afternoons the automobile controls were filled with cars that were carrying these husbands and fathers into the mountains for the week-end. But from early Monday morning until the following Saturday, these mothers and these children were the lone households in the big woods. And woe-fully ignorant of woodlore they were, for the most part.

Ole and Pat were later than usual in getting into their beloved mountains that summer, for they had been prevailed upon to stay at a Redlands ranch until the apricots had been picked. However, as July entered and drew on, the wanderlust burned the ankles and gripped the toes of the two men, so that July 15th found them trudging up Mill Creek Cañon, driving their three burros—Yenny and Yock and Hilda Swanson—the latter named in memory of, and concession to, one of Ole's sweethearts in Sweden.

Reaching the crest of the first rise and dipping down on a wide, winding highway, the cavalcade turned east when it reached a point a mile above the Santa Ana control, and twisted along the north side of Mount San Bernardino. At a small creek that now barely dribbled over a huge rock—and that yet tore out the road and bridge in its spring freshening—they stopped, watered the burros, adjusted the packs and rested. A glance at a huge silver watch showed McMurray that it was two o'clock.

"Let's r-rack alawng," he advised, beating the dust from his huge whiskers. "We ought to make South For-rk to night-camp."

They racked along, toiling up the rocky road, angling through a tremendous forest of pines and firs, with the Santa Ana curling along a thousand feet below on the left; and San Bernardino lifting its rugged, tree-clad side above them, five thousand feet, on the right. The air was thinning, cooling. The two men found their shoulders lifting, their thoughts lifting, their lungs filling and expanding with the pungency of the piny odors. They were entering into their own, among their own people. After the long months of waiting for the passing of the snows, they were at last freed. They breathed deeply, and felt years slipping from them.

"Not a thang changed," Ole offered, looking about him with eager eyes.

"No. It's just me an' you that git older," McMurray grinned.

From time to time they passed the tents of the myriad of campers. Once they stopped to put out a fire that had been left smoldering beneath an insufficiency of soil that was meant to extinguish it.

"Ay tank dot faller a dam fool, he should not be loose," Ole grumbled as they made the smoldering embers safe.

More miles were made, and in a huge pine meadow off to the right the two men saw the white and khaki of a dozen tents, and heard the lilting voices of half a hundred children. The mothers sat beneath the towering limbs, resting in the dapple shade of late afternoon, recuperating their heat-sodden faculties in this cool wonderland. It was a marvelous glen of a place, but—and this brought sudden pause to the two mountain men—there was but one road out, the angling highway up which the burro train now trudged.

It was a pocket. Back along this highway, two miles, was a private road to Seven Oaks. From there one could go into Big Bear Valley to the north, or into the Mill Creek road to the south. To the right, up the mountainside, were trails that led to the peak of San Bernardino and San Geronio, but these were two-day treks for strong men, and were not friendly to the feet and lungs of women and children. Farther along the road that the burro train now traveled, the trail ended at Big Meadows. From there on was but a winding path that led up to the end of the cañon, where one looked over into the Morongo Pass and to the desert.

HALTING their burros, Ole and Pat deliberated over this situation.

"Thot's a bad place for a camp," Pat mused. "If foire'd come, they'd be caught."

"Ay tank we'd better tal 'em," Ole offered after several minutes.

Plodding over to the group of tents, the men enlarged as best they could on the menace of an ended road and that of possible fire. One or two of the women seemed impressed; they promised to take it up with their husbands, Saturday. Others—and these were the younger ones—were inclined to take the warning lightly.

"Why, this is a regular camping-place!" one expostulated.

"When there's lots of wather, yes," Pat amended.

"I'll bet those old fellows want to camp here themselves," another young woman offered.

Pat turned in huge disgust. "Aw, come awn," he exploded. "Let's go."

Light laughter followed the two men as they turned away.

Two more miles were made by the little train. The sun sank, haze-rimmed and red, into the limbs of the pines and cedars and silver firs. The winelike evening coolness dropped about things. Shadows were tremendously magnified. The voices of two narrowed brooks, crossed on the winding road, increased and roared with their night-songs. Dozens of crested blue jays darted from tree to tree and rasped their displeasure at this intrusion of men and animals. A saucy little junco bird teetered on the stump of a tree and twitched its tail as it watched. The mountains to the north drew about them their evening robes of purple and gold and silver grey. It was entirely peaceful and safe.

"Foive moiles to go," said Pat, replacing the silver watch again. "It'll be dar-rk whin we make camp. . . . Oi'm sthll thinkin' thim women is fools, all right."

"Ay tank so too. Dey have lots to learn an' long tam to learn it in!"—sagely.

"If a foire'd br-reak out,"—Pat could not drive his thoughts away from this,— "they'd be gawn goslin's. It's a dommed lucky thing that it aint bruk out. . . . My Gawd, look!"

THE burro train had rounded a point of rock. A wide mountain meadow lay to the left, free of trees and carpeted with short brown grass. It covered perhaps forty acres, and was bounded on the one side by the road, with a low line of heavy brush on the other side. Beyond this brush was the growth of huge trees—sleeping tinder—and both men knew that, as the contour of land ran, this line of trees lifted to the place of many tents, where women were now busied with the evening meal, and where children played. And in this meadow was a blaze.

It was not a huge, roaring fire. It did not leap and thrust its tongues into the dry verdure. It crept, angling and licking. It must be controlled. Stripping off his heavy leather jacket, Ole turned questioningly to Pat.

"How about go for halp?" he asked.

The Irishman deliberated but an instant, "Help, hell!" he spat. "By the road it's

two moiles back to that camp. It'd be blazin' gr-reat guns by thot toime. Git yer shovel an' git to wor-rk!"

The burros drifted into the cañon above the road as the two men tore off the packs and grabbed the shovels. Leaping down the slope, they attacked the fire. At one end of a fifty-foot line Casey worked; at the other end Ole labored. Digging into the loose, dry soil, they lifted out great masses of earth and rock, and cast them upon the flames. At times the shovel points struck rock that would not be moved, but sent forth sharp sparks.

Finding the blaze easily controlled in the short grass, they steadily worked closer to each other; yet ten feet away, up the hillside, was a heavier growth, and masses of purple sage, now in bloom, that would burn like oil when the fire struck it. They must bend the biting line of blaze back down the wide swale; they must, at the same time, keep it from the line of brush and timber at the lower edge; also they must not allow it to reach this sage-growth, and the heavier fuel near the road.

The sun sank while they worked. Heavy perspiration broke forth beneath their clothing, and one by one they stripped other garments until they labored in their heavy corduroy breeches, boots and undershirts. Their throats were dried, blistered, parched, and yet they could not stop to drink from the little stream that rippled a hundred feet away. Their shoulders and arms were numbed, and creaked, it seemed, at each movement; and yet there could be no cessation to this movement. They could not hesitate for anything; they were winning in their battle; and yet an instant's advantage either way was that upon which the final victory settled.

SLOWLY they moved nearer to each other, the shovels digging in, lifting painfully, and tossing their burdens upon the blaze. And yet the angling, rippling flames seemed endowed with the devilish power to keep always a few shovelfuls beyond the two panting men. Strive as they might, while they had succeeded in cutting the burned swath by a possible seventy-five per cent, they could not kill out the little stretch that roared and giped at them.

An hour passed. It was tremendous labor, what with the choking smoke that followed one, with the blaze that leaped at ankles and shins, and with the parched

throats and roaring heads. It was tremendous labor, and its working began to tell upon the excitable Irishman. He called peevishly to his partner, urging him on to greater efforts.

"What ar-re ye layin' down for, ye big, lazy Swede?" he rasped.

Ole made no reply, but went ploddingly on with his eternal shoveling. A mass of sage was reached by the flames, and its dried under branches leaped and glowed. Pat sprang to this new menace, beat it out, and turned to another threatened bush.

"Say, ye lazy divil," he gritted, "come over here an' help with this, dom ye!"

A SPARK of anger flashed into Ole. His nerves—those few he possessed—were also torn and shriveled with the laboring in this tremendous last hour.

"Ay tank Ay vork as fast as you!" he blurted.

McMurray grumbled incoherently.

Slowly and slowly, after that, the blaze gained on them, despite their nervous leaping from bush to bush, despite their continued savage pounding of brush and hurling of earth. From a bare five feet of line the fire reached into eight feet, nine feet, ten feet. Shovels became as weighty as the stern of a steamship; each burden of rock and soil took on the dimensions of a huge mountain. Shovels rasped and grated, were tremendously lifted, and fell again. Lungs panted and gasped and choked against the tremendous whip of heat and smoke, and against the more tremendous thirst. Eyeballs were inflamed, almost sightless. Shoulders ached. Arms tore themselves from their sockets. Legs tottered and buckled. And yet the two aged men worked. They had set themselves a task.

Five feet, the flame, and there it stayed for minutes that seemed hours. Four feet, and a longer interval while the shovels were sent to their torturing tasks. Half-sobbing, now, Pat was leaping here and there, beating at the fire. Ole was plodding along, killing out a sector and turning to another. Four feet of fire—three feet! But they could not reduce it.

"Oh, ye lazy pup," Pat screamed, "if Oi had anybody but a dirty Swede, Oi'd a-had this out long ago!"

"Ay tank Ay not so lazy as you," Ole mumbled.

"Ye're a big puff o' wind!" Pat was vitriolic in his nervous anger.

"A poof o' wind'll blow you to hal an' gone, all right," Ole threatened.

"Aw, git to wor-rk, ye big ox! Ye're a dirty bum!"

"Ay not a boom!"—patiently, yet firing a little.

"Ye're worse'n a bum—ye're yellow!"

"Ay not yallow. Ye're a liar. Ay tak a poke at you, all right."

With this altering in Ole's demeanor, Pat straightened quickly from his work. With this new threat of battle, a new vigor was born within him. His nostrils were cleared of the choking smoke; his shoulders were eased; his heart reduced its rapid effort. Generations and generations of fighting Irishmen called to him and worked within him the ferment of their magic.

"Who's a liar?" he screamed. "Who'll take a poke at me? Oi'll bate ye till ye're blind! There aint no dirty old Swede that—"

Tossing aside his shovel, Ole leaped at this additional insult. His hands clutched his partner's shoulder, and swaying an instant, the two men stood, body to body, face to face. Their fangs were bared in battle. Pat's red whiskers stood out alarmingly. Back of them, at their very feet, indeed, the little flames took a new lease of life and licked greedily into new grass.

"Ay'll—Ay'll—" Ole panted.

"Yiss, ye'll—ye'll!" Pat mimicked.

DURING an instant they tugged and panted, and then, overcome with the labor of the last tremendous hour, they went to the ground, arms locked in arms. Rolling about in the flames, they pummeled and pushed and struggled over many feet of earth—on their knees one moment, down and rolling and threshing about in the next. The battle lasted a bare three minutes; yet in that time they covered the space of a city lot. The grass was torn up; the flames were trampled on; and rolling thus, they fell upon the three-foot stretch of flame that was now increased to a four-foot line. Back and forth they pushed and struggled, body rolling over body, legs and arms entangled hopelessly, Ole's back now crushing out a line of fire, and Pat's knees now tearing out another sector.

Feeling at last the bite of flame in his face, Pat screamed forth a curse.

"Lemme up!" he gasped. "I'm all burnt—my whiskers are all afoire, ye dom fool! Lemme up!"

Struggling to his feet, Ole stood aside, his shoulders rising and falling with tremendous effort. Noting several sparks on his corduroys, he beat them out, then stepped to Pat's side and assisted in the extinguishing of the whiskers. Together they briefly inspected Pat's blistered nose.

During an instant they stood thus, then looked about them. The four-foot line of fire was gone. Two or three tiny points of flame struggled to renew themselves, but were quickly beaten out. After this had been accomplished, the two men—scarred with physical battle, their garments sweat-stained and torn, their shoulders heaving, their lungs filled with smoke—stood and looked. Dropping to the ground, Pat laughed, at first wearily, then resoundingly. Ole stood, puzzled.

"That dam' fire bane all gone out," he said in bewilderment.

SQUATTED on his haunches in Harden's doorway, McMurray looked up and chuckled.

"We rolled on the dommed thing, and what wit this an' thot, we put it out while we was fightin'," he said. "Oh, 'twas a merry ol' mill, all right! The big Swede hit me twicet in the jaw so Oi felt it f'r a week, Oi did thot. 'Twas a merry, merry mill—until my whiskers caught afoire," he amended reflectively.

"An' you know what thot big Swede said, afther we had looked aroun' an' saw what our scufflin' and strivin' had done? He looked over at me, an' he looked aroun' at the ground, that was all black and parched, an' he said: 'Why the hal didn't you tank of that way to fight foire before, you big ignor'nt Irishman?'"

The roaring of four voices filled the cabin. Ole walked to the door and looked out over the tree-clad slopes, an eye on the burros. He turned, grinning down on his partner, indicating him with a huge thumb.

"He's a hal of a foony faller, aint he?" he asked of us.

Mr. Horn is writing some more of his inimitable stories; and you may look forward to another in an early issue.



Free Lances in Diplomacy

"Jason Hudders, M. P." is the title of this, one of the most thoughtful, significant and humanly interesting of all these famous stories by a writer whose name has come to be synonymous with that of The Blue Book Magazine.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

WHEN Hudders was elected to Parliament by a substantial majority from Lemsworth, he was one of the most surprised men in London. A product of the Board Schools, a young mechanic of the East End, then a debater, upon occasion, at the People's Palace, showing rather unusual ability in that line—and presently what Americans would call a "labor leader"—a politician in the poorer, workingmen's districts. It is doubtful if becoming a Member of Parliament ever came into his mind until it was suggested to him by other politicians in local authority—because inherited viewpoint dies hard. Certain things fell quite naturally to the "toffs" because they always had fallen to them—avocations upon a lesser plane fell to the masses. Such things always had been so; one should think twice before attempting to overstep the bounds. True, there were men in Parliament who had risen from the masses; but the fact of having risen, set them apart from the common herd as men of exceptional ability.

But the wheel was now turning—those at the bottom were coming uppermost.

Government was a Labor Government. In the face of a fact like that, anything might happen. When it was definitely agreed that Hudders should stand for some borough in a by-election, he naturally supposed it would be from one of those in the East End, but the Labor "whips" said no—such boroughs being so thoroughly "People's Party" that anybody could be returned from them without much of a contest. In Lemsworth, on the other hand, it was carrying the fight into what always had been Conservative territory—with peculiar conditions at that particular moment which gave a Labor candidate at least an even chance; and the effect, if he were successful, was sure to jar the Conservative morale. Aside from that, Hudders had an aunt and cousins in Lemsworth—was a more or less familiar figure there on bank holidays, and had once defeated the champion of the local debating club. So he went down as instructed, and came back a duly elected Member, with all the rights and privileges enjoyed by any of the toffs.

At thirty, he was still unmarried—for a

number of reasons. He had sipped a taste or two of very limited power in political circles of the East End. Ambition was stirring. He'd had his brief affairs with women—but none of them drifted into an engagement, because his mind was occupied by something else. Another reason may have been Minnie Watrous, his landlady's daughter, though what sentimental passages there had been between them were more the natural outcome of propinquity than real attraction. They had gone through the Board Schools together—he, taking up the mechanics' trade upon graduation, and she the making of artificial flowers in a milliner's shop near Bond Street. It was not that her mother was doing so badly with her furnished rooms, but the additional savings from Minnie's pay enabled them to buy the house—even, in a few years more, to cancel most of the mortgage. Hudders' taking their best second-floor room with bath attached was the logical outcome of the acquaintance—he had been there eight years at the time of his election.

AFTER a few months the "politicals" in the background began to reveal more of their plans for him—until presently he understood that he was being pushed for but two underlying reasons—his ability in debate, and a personality which could be rather appealing when he was feeling his best. He supposed, naturally enough, that anything he might do or say in Parliament would be largely a matter of his own judgment upon the impulse of the moment. Instead of this, however, he found himself sitting on the Labor benches, day after day, feeling rather overawed at the place he was in, and having no inclination to make himself conspicuous there. But the plans for him were taking shape without his having much to say in the matter. At a conference in his room, one evening, he was told that the proper motion had been made for him to address the House upon the subject of Land Nationalization at the end of the following week.

"But—I say! Look here, you chaps! I'll not have time to draw up a proper bill before then! It's a subject which requires thought an' a good bit of digging in the lib'r'ies, d'ye see—"

"Nobody's suggesting your introducing a bill, Hudders—not for the present, at least! What we're contemplatin' is merely a sketchy presentation on the idea of nationalizin' the land—an explanation of

what we've in mind to do when we're ready to call for a division—a sort of preparin' the toffs for what's comin' when we get our rights. This ye can easily write out an' stick in yer memory so as to make it look like ye was givin', off-hand, our ideas on the subject. An' ye'll be gettin' the proper clothes at once, d'ye mind, even if ye dip into yer savings a bit! A bowler hat an' sack coat may be all very well for a chap on the rear benches who never opens his mouth—but addressin' the 'ouse is a dif'rent matter, ye'll observe."

Hudders' sensations, at the picture, were something like the man at a nihilists' meeting who has drawn the short stick and must kill the victim before a certain time—being most likely killed himself in doing it.

"But—but, I say! I'll not do it! An' that's flat! I'll not get up there an' make a bally ass of myself until I've had proper time to bone up on the subject an' know what I'm talking about!"

"Ye will not, eh? Now, why d'ye s'pose we put ye in Parliament—to twiddle yer thumbs an' nap the day through as ye please? Man—ye've no say in the matter! Ye'll do as ye're bid—without argym'nt!"

"And if I don't?"

"Faith—we'll be applyin' persuasive measures, that's all! Ye fool! D'ye think at a time when the workin'-men is got the chance to get their rights in Parliament, a bit of a cub in training is to say what he will or w... not do! Ye'll do as ye're bid, d'ye mind—else ye may be found rottin', the morn', in the Thames! That's the worst side of the picture, lad, an' ye brought it on yerself by fool's talk. But what ye'd best be fixin' yer mind on is the distance ye'll be goin' up in the world if ye like—the honors that'll be comin' to ye! Play the gyme, lad—play the gyme!"

"Look ye! I said, a bit gone, that ye must dip into yer savings for clothes. Well—we'll do better by ye nor that! The pay an' mileage of a Member is none so much—but the Labor Party's behind ye. 'Ere's a matter of a 'undred p'und—stow it in yer trousers an' use it as ye wish! But ye must do yer best by us, lad! We must have a speech from ye that'll be copied in all the news-sheets an' make the toffs sit up a bit! Ye can do it! 'Twas for the gift at that we had ye returned from Lemsworth—to be used, all in good time, f'r the benefit of the Labor Party. So—make up yer mind what ye'll be doin' Friday-week, an' be prepared for it. Aye!"

WHEN they had gone, Minnie came in—softly closing the door behind her. It is worth considering at times that certain rules of conduct may be taboo in one section of a city yet quite permissible in others—so much depends upon the local viewpoint. In the West End, for example, one does not spy upon or try to overhear what other people are saying. It simply isn't done. But in Stepney, where one's upbringing is elementary and follows the line of least resistance, one uses any available means to come by what may be profitable or interesting—it is one of the neighborhood pleasures in life. Consequently, Minnie—from the darkened adjoining room, which had a communicating closet when the sliding-door was unlocked—had listened comfortably to the entire talk, and was much more excited than Hudders over what was in store for him.

"Oh, Jase! I heard most of it! Isn't it grand! Think of you, living right here in this room just like one of the family all these years, standing up there in all your grand new clothes and giving the toffs what-for—right in Parliament! I'll just die if you don't find some place where I can see it all when you're doing it!"

"Hmph! That's simple enough, lass! A card from me for the Visitors' Gallery is all you'll be needing. It's what I'm to do that's the more serious matter. D'ye know—for a matter of tuppence, I'd chuck it all and ship aboard a P. and O. boat for Austrylia!"

"And why would you be doing that? Can you not see the great honor it is for you! That it's but the step to something bigger! They mean well by you, Jase—those chaps! They think you're clever—and they mean putting you further up as fast as you'll go."

"Er—d'ye fancy your mother'd like to go along with you to Westminster?"

"Not she! It'll be in the morning news-sheets—she'll read it over her tea and bacon. The poor dear has put on another stone in the last year—her feet hurt her. Did they really give you a hundred quid, Jase—to blow on clothes or anything you please? They'd not do that if you weren't valuable to them. A hundred quid'll be something one doesn't see in Stepney often—let me look! Please! Who's to make your things?"

"Wonder if little Crawley would have them done in time?"

"Aye—if he had to work every night!

But he'll not do—he's not the proper style. You'll just come up to Bond Street with me tomorrow—I'll show you a swagger shop. They're open till ten in the evening, but it's too late to get there now. We'll have a bit of a celebration—dinner in a jolly place I know. You can blow, if you like—and I'll take you to a cinema after we've been to the shop. What?"

IN all his life, no suit of clothes had ever meant to Hudders what that one did—had ever seemed to call for as much serious consideration. And Minnie was equally absorbed in the various points to be considered. The cloth must be good, wearable stuff—both of them having held that as the chief requisite too many years to launch out into ephemeral plumage. The cut and the type of suit were, of course, matters for the tailors' decision—one doesn't pay twenty pounds for a Bond Street suit and question authority upon those points. Much to their surprise, the casual mention that the clothes were for a "Member" had no perceptible effect upon the tailors. With lords and dukes for their regular customers, M. P.'s were pin-money—though they knew the species as much more prompt pin-money than the bigger game, and professional reputation wouldn't permit of their giving him anything but their best either in goods or advice. The spats they also provided. For haberdashery, he was directed to Forsythe's, at the top of the street—and one purchased the "topper" in Piccadilly. When the various articles were sent home, his outlay had mounted to some thirty-five pounds—and he was in two minds as to whether it was criminal extravagance or justifiable expenditure in the circumstances. That evening there was a dress rehearsal—Minnie being let in as soon as he called through the communicating closet that the trousers and spats were on.

His first attempts at the Ascot tie were failures—the ready-made bow-tie with an elastic loop for one's collar-button having been his habit up to then. In her West End shop, however, Minnie had cultivated the faculty of observation, and with a few deft twists and pats, she had the tie on him with exactly the right air—a Park Lane valet could have done no better. But she had to coach him a bit before he was able to produce an approximate result. Then came the "topper"—a beautiful, shiny silk magnificence which neither scarcely dared touch lest they mar its per-

fection. Hudders' idea, naturally, was a slight rake on one side of the head—like the old Duke of Appleby, for example. (If a noble duke isn't authority upon the wearing of a topper, for mercy's sake who *is*!) But Minnie's taste was more conservative.

"It's like this, Jase! It makes no difference what a duke wears, because everybody knows he's a duke, and it doesn't matter. But when *you* get up to address the House, nobody knows who you are until you prove that you're somebody they must reckon with. Keep your name in all the news-sheets for a bit, and you might wear a pincushion on your head if you liked. Others would copy you—pincushions would be all the rage. But as an unknown man, your clothes must be so perfectly right that nobody even sees them! Then your face and what you say will hold them."

"Aye, lass—I can see there's something in that. But most of the Labor Members are makin' a point of sitting in Parliament in their everyday clothes. They're strong for giving the impression of being exactly what they are—workingmen—on the job, or in Parliament, makes no difference which. This being a Labor Governm't, they're all keen upon dressin' an' actin' the part. If there's advantage of any sort in that, why are they set upon making a popinjay out of *me*?"

"For the same reason that we like to see His Majesty the best dressed man in the United Kingdom—he's our representative before the public. Well—belike, you're the outstanding figure of the Labor Party in Parliament—its representative—and must be as good as the best in appearance. You have ability in debate which none of the others have, so they put you up to hold your own against the toffs for our side."

"Aye—but there's a bit of a stinger in that, lass! The reason I usually hold my own in the debating clubs is because I'm first sure of my facts. If they're basically right and defensible, I can logically defeat anyone who talks against them. But in this matter of addressin' the House, I'm by no means sure of my facts—'twould be a matter of months to study them all out, to anticipate the argum'ts against them and be prepared in advance. I think the whips are riding for a fall in making me do this on such brief notice—the subject of land-nationalization is altogether too big—too much detail to be puzzled out!"

THE girl hadn't been paying strict attention to this last—her eyes had been roving around the room, noting certain things which offended her taste but which had been left as they were for reasons of economy.

"Jase—Mother and I have been thinking we might do better by you, now that you're a Member and all. We've been getting bids on putting in the electricity. It'll run to money, but it can be managed with a bit from our savings. I never liked that student-lamp—the slavey'll not clean it properly—gets the reek of paraffin all through the house. You could do with a good floor and a rug or two, I fancy. What with the politicals coming here to confer with you,—all kinds of people, belike,—the place should be more fit for your position. That's, of course, if you mean sticking on with us, now that you're a great man."

"Foolish talk, lass! I'm no great man, as others will find out soon enough. An' the Labor Governm't'll be out in a few months; belike I'll not be returned in that case. Then I'm but what I was before. You'd best not run to expense on my account—unless you're set upon it for reasons of your own, to be sure."

"Well—it's partly that, too, I suppose. It means something—owning one's house and sticks! We've worked hard for it, Mother and I; we've still a good bit of work left in us. So why not have nice things—fix the place as we wish it, in decent taste?"

THE eventful Friday came, as Fridays do. It was what Londoners consider a sweltering hot night—a good seventy-six or seventy-eight, at least—and muggy, because of fog drifting up the River to Westminster. Yet the galleries of the House of Commons were packed with a mixed crowd of visitors, many of them obviously enjoying a first experience of the sort. On the floor, the benches were unusually full, there being few absentees among the Members—quite a number of peers having come in from the upper house.

Hudders had been in his seat at three in the afternoon—the notes of his speech in his pocket; and each time the Honorable Speaker recognized some Member, it gave him a nervous start, though he had been assured by the whips that his time probably wouldn't come until after the dinner-hour in the evening. His opening remarks

were as fixed in his mind as the stylus-impressions upon a phonograph-disk—he could have repeated them unconsciously in his sleep—in fact, had been doing so for several nights, and never getting beyond the first dozen sentences. Now, to his consternation, he suddenly realized that he was losing even them—could only recall in a vague sort of way the general idea of the whole speech. Dig as he had in the time given him, he had been unable to block out even the semblance of a logical plan for what he was to advocate. Hilquit—one of the whips who was in the game solely for what he managed to get out of it, one way or another—took him out for dinner at one of the more famous near-by restaurants and urged a quart of champagne as a stimulant, but Hudders preferred three cups of black coffee and a rather light meal.

As the big cups of coffee began to get in their work, his nerves became jumpy, but a couple of pipes in the Members' Lobby steadied them. When the Speaker finally recognized him, the House was nothing but a blur through which individual faces seemed to leer out at him—grinning with malice at his apparent confusion, scowling with contempt at this Labor fledgling who had the temerity to force his half-baked theories upon the serious deliberations of the British House of Commons.

When it seemed to him that he must have been making a pitiable spectacle of himself for at least fifteen minutes, his vision became miraculously clear. Some one was saying in a penetrating voice: "My Lord—and Honorable Members of His Majesty's House of Commons—I am given the privilege of placing before you in a general way some idea of the future conditions as to land-tenure which seem to us fair, not only to one class of British subjects, but to all classes, men and women alike. We are not offering at this time a bill for your consideration, because the subject requires too much careful working out of the details on account of its far-reaching consequences and great volume; but one of our committees will be constantly at work upon this until we can present the proposition in a practical form—"

Presently it dawned upon Hudders that it was he who was doing the talking—in better form than he ever had been in his life—holding the interest of everyone on the floor or in the galleries by sheer personality and apparent earnestness of belief

in his subject. In a capsule, boiled down, the proposition was for the Government to take over all the land of whatever sort, wherever situated, and redivide it pro-rata among the population, so that each individual should have title to so much actual land of his or her own. But Hudders so broadened this with comparisons as to the injustice of one man owning thousands of acres, keeping most of them unproductive, while the next equally worthy individual hadn't a foot of ground he might call his own, that the naked facts of the proposition had much of their absurdity and impracticability covered over to such an extent as to be scarcely discernible except to men of logical mind, skilled in debate.

ONE of these, on the Conservative benches, requested permission to question the Honorable Member upon one or two points. This being granted, he stated from memoranda in his hand that, with a total area in the United Kingdom of slightly under seventy-eight million acres—and a total population of forty-six millions—the Honorable Member's proposal worked out to an actual distribution of one and seven-tenths acres for each individual—some acres being worth, approximately, thirty pounds, while others comprising city blocks were easily worth half a million pounds and could not be distributed to a single individual without tearing down all the buildings on them, on every acre in the city, and rebuilding with a thousand times more area to cover. So—he rose to inquire whether the Honorable Member had considered these facts and thought such objections could be met in a practical way?

This had been one of the things which Hudders had foreseen—one of the unanswerable arguments which neither he nor any other Laborite had any practical way of answering—but owing to this foresight, he wasn't taken unawares and simply floored by it. With a smile, he reminded the Honorable Member of his preliminary statement that his remarks would only cover the subject in a general way at this time—that their committee were at work upon a practical, detailed plan which would be ready when the bill was introduced—closing the argument for the time being with the assurance to the Honorable Member that no bill of that sort would or could be introduced until all such objections had been met in a practical way, even though it involved protracted debate.

A stir of uneasiness rippled through the Labor benches at this final announcement. What was the lad letting them in for? Suppose no satisfactory answer to such arguments could be worked out by any of them—eh? They were strong on pressing legislation for what they considered their rights, but weak upon anything like constructive planning.

There was no getting around the fact that Hudders carried off the situation in a masterly way. So convincing was his apparent certainty that ways were being figured out to overcome every objection which might be urged against the scheme, that Conservative Members rubbed their eyes and began to wonder if they were losing their senses. It was simply another demonstration of a magnetic personality showing conclusively to a large audience that black was really white, but that in a little while it would prove to be flame-color.

AS he finally sat down, there was a roar of applause from everyone in the House—not for a masterly demonstration of facts and arguments in their favor, because there had been nothing of the sort; not for the suggestion of a new, progressive, and beneficial idea—because there wasn't a level-headed person in the lot who didn't know that the basis proposition was utter rot; but for the sheer ability of a young man who could present an utopian, impossible scheme with so much semblance of possibility as to make them believe for the time-being that he might actually turn up at some later session with a perfectly workable plan along those lines! There had been other questions, but in each case Hudders had met them with a calm air of conviction and assurance that every objection would be fully met at some future time. It takes cold nerve to do that sort of thing when a man is inwardly convinced that he never can deliver the goods—but what else was there to say? He carried off an almost impossible situation by sheer self-assurance—and thought of the first man who claimed to have discovered the North Pole while he was doing it.

Minnie had sat in the gallery spellbound—her throat parched, her eyes wet. She wanted, more than anything else in the world, to take him home alone in a taxi, to hug and to mother him—because she had seen that the man was utterly exhausted from the strain when he finished.

(Coffee does that to one after it has first helped.) But she knew, of course, that it would be impossible for him to break away from the enthusiastic Labor Members for some time, that some if not several would accompany him home, which happened as she expected. Six of them piled into a motor-landaulet and reached the house before she could by tube and bus. With a word or two of explanation to her mother, and promise of details later, she hurried up to the dark room in the rear and listened to the powwow in front.

THE bulk of it was enthusiastic praise—slappings upon an already sore back, insistence upon another I'll drink, and then another. Bits of criticism presently cropped out. He should not have promised anything like the detailed plan when the bill was presented—

"Then you'll not even get a vote on it! Look here, you chaps! Those objections have got to be met—every one of them! You forced me to get up there and talk of something which has never been tried out, though I warned you that it was impossible to make any logical presentation in the time you gave me! Well—I did the best I could. . . ."

"Faith, ye did so, lad! Ye had the toffs sittin' up an' believin' what ye said!"

"Not for a minute! They don't believe a word of it! They had me on every question, did they not?"

"Oh, if ye waste time on argyment, they *did* that. But we're not descendin' to argy with them—we're but askin' for our rights, an' we mean to 'ave 'em!"

"If you can make them sound reasonable and workable, you may get them—otherwise, three-quarters of the people in the United Kingdom will be against you. I've believed all along that *some* of our ideas were practical—but remember this: you'll not do with Britons what the Soviet is doing with Russians—because we've too much intelligence as a nation. When it comes to a division in the House of Commons, it's on a basis of fact—not wild theory! So—the rest of you had best put on your thinking-caps and study out this land question in all its bearings before you say another word about it on the floor! Now—I—"

MINNIE came in abruptly and cleared the men out of the room in so uncompromising a way that none ventured to

protest. Hudders had certainly done a big thing for the Party, and was entitled to his rest. Pulling his aching head down upon her shoulder, the girl soothed and quieted him until her mother puffed slowly up the stairs with a tray upon which an appetizing supper filled the room with its strengthening odor—then she fed him, a mouthful at a time, without a word until he had finished. As she was collecting the dishes, the doorbell rang below, though it was after one in the morning. After lighting the gas in her little parlor and admitting the caller, she fetched his card up to Hudders:

GEORGE LLANGOLEN TREVOR
St. James Club

Something familiar in the visitor's face and general appearance kept prodding her mind in the attempt to place him. Then her eye fell upon a copy of the *Illustrated London Times*, and she hurriedly turned the pages until she found the portrait of a celebrity which she remembered seeing in it. As far as she could judge in a poor light, the two were identical—but just to make sure, she took down a copy of "Who's Who" from the Member's shelf and looked for the name—then showed it to him.

"My word! For why d'ye s'pose the noble Earl would be calling upon me at this time of night?"

"Something important, or he'd not come—you may wager your tuppence on that, Jase! Will you put on your coat again and go down?"

"I will not! If a toff insists upon seein' me at this hour, when he must know I'm fair beat out, he'll just take me as he finds me, lass. Have him up!"

AFTER ushering the visitor into Hudders' room, the girl was about to retire—to the back chamber—but he smilingly urged her to sit down with them.

"It's nothing private which I wish to discuss with Mr. Hudders, you know—and there's a reason why I'd like to have you stay, Miss Watrous. We've never happened to meet, but a young cousin of ours stopped with you last year when he came from Canada—told us a lot concernin' you and your mother—how well you treated him, all that. You see, the lad somehow got the impression that we were by way of being snobs—not caring to bother with poor relations—and so waited several weeks before presentin' his letter to us. Meanwhile we'd been advised of his coming and

wondered what could have happened to the lad. Fortunately, he ran across mutual friends, who assured him he was vastly mistaken in his notion of us. We'd gladly have kept him on as long as he'd stay. So—you see we might consider that by way of introduction to you and Mrs. Watrous."

"I'm sure we're pleased to have Your Lordship look at it that way. Of course, Mr. Jimmy spoke of you several times—but he never said you were a relative."

"No—the lad was quite independent. People respected him for it. Well—I mustn't keep Mr. Hudders from his rest a moment longer than necess'ry—he's certainly earned it! Your speech, sir, was one of the most remarkable ones I ever listened to. I could see that you were forced to stick upon generalities because you'd no basic facts to offer, as yet—which made what you did all the more amazing. Now,—getting to my point,—I've been trying out an experiment in land-tenure down in South Devon which I wish very much to have you see, as it is working out, because it has a direct bearing upon your land-nationalization idea.

"Over a year ago, I ran a weekly ad in the principal Labor sheets of the United Kingdom, stating that a clear title to three twenty-acre farms would be given any responsible tenant at the expiration of five years if he felt willing to accept certain conditions—which were these: Seed, tools, implements and fertilizers were to be supplied by the owner, gratis. The tenant to cultivate the land as best he could, splitting evenly any yearly profits with the owner, with privilege of drawing up to a pound a week against his share if he seemed to be working conscientiously. If, at the expiration of five years, his yearly average of outfit equalled or exceeded that of the last five years,—which were none too good, if you remember, for the farmer,—title in the land passed free and clear to him. If the average was not up to the previous one,—if he proved to be a shirker, didn't do a reasonable amount of work in cultivating,—the land returned to the owner, and the tenant got nothing but his half of the profits."

"And what did Your Lordship, as owner, get out of it?"

"Merely the testing of my theory that if every individual in the population were given land of his own to do with as he chose, not one in a hundred thousand would cultivate the land or even stay on it if at

any distance from a large city. I've been unusually fortunate in most of my commercial undertakings—can well afford to be altruistic occasionally."

"How many wished to take ye up on that proposition?"

"For the first six months that the ads appeared—not one! Then two fellows were sent down by the London agents to look the land over. They returned by the next train—it didn't interest them, although the soil is some of the richest in England. A month later, a man in poor health, thinking work in the open air would benefit him, fetched down his wife and son. They're ahead of the average already, and have a comfortable home which you'd fancy almost anyone might wish to own—largely through the work of that sixteen-year-old lad. But I doubt if they stick the five years—they're already restless for the cinema-shows and city life.

"Another man, about the same time, proved a born farmer. He'll have a tidy lump of savings in the bank when the land eventually passes to him. A third man, who came a few months ago, can't get used to the fact that nature doesn't pay much attention to union hours. He'd been a mill-hand in Leeds, with some ambition toward independence. So it struck me, as I listened to your speech this evening, that if you and a couple of other Labor Members, with the ladies of your families, would accept an invitation to run down as our guests, say, from Thursday until Monday, you could get in talking with those three tenants a fairly average idea of what individual land-ownership amounts to—what appeal it has to the average person—and how much of the land now idle among the larger estates would be put under cultivation if it were divided up as you propose. Haven't you in mind a couple of friends among the Labor Members whom you think might be induced to visit us for some such object as this? Two of our cars will fetch them down from London if they care for motoring—or we'll have you met at the Dartmouth station."

"Faith—I think any of our party might be induced to accept an invitation to a country estate as famous as Trevor Hall! Their women-folk would do the inducin' if there was any chance of their balkin' at it! But Your Lordship, doubtless, would prefer men who do their own thinking and base it on what they observe? There's Doyle, for example. His wife's a peg above his

class—a governess, when they married. She and the girl wouldn't disgrace ye if they went. And—well—Holmebaugh, the Labor leader in Hackney—"

"DOYLE and his family we'd be much pleased to have. As for Holmebaugh—I'm sorry. He happens to be a man whom we can't receive. No longer ago than last week he was given, and accepted, five thousand pounds from a man known to be a secret agent of the Moscow Soviet for his services in spreading propaganda and trying to compromise the workingmen of England into affiliation with the Reds."

"I think Your Lordship had best withdraw that statement! Seriously, you know, it amounts to criminal libel—and Holmebaugh is just the man to sue you for a million, sterling!"

"It would please me exceedingly if he did, Mr. Hudders—because the facts would be proved so conclusively in the public prints that if he remained in this country at all it would be in one of our jails. I had the facts straight from a Downing Street man who saw the money given him and had been shadowing the Soviet agent for weeks. So we'd best forget Holmebaugh as something offensive and think up some friend of yours who would make a good third. Some one like Doyle—what?"

"Is Your Lordship really positive in what you say about Holmebaugh?"

"So much so that I'm fair asking that million-pound suit for slander in order to expose the bounder! Governm't is biding its time in order to get evidence against others—but meanwhile, the fellow is spreading poison and should be arrested. You'll do your party a good turn, Mr. Hudders, if you quietly pass the word as to just what he is. I'll back your statements to any extent. But—as to your other friend?"

"Why—I fancy John Boulder and his woman might be acceptable. She was a bit crude when they married, but has done well by herself in taking on the little social observances—and she's honest, straightforward. Your other guests would respect her, I think, even though she's obviously not a lady—"

"Who is a lady, for that matter? Or a gentleman? Birth has little to do with it! It's a question of courtesy—inborn kindness—respect for the opinions and feelings of others, honesty, good will toward everybody who is not a public menace, but unrelenting hatred of those who would de-

stroy the fabric of civilization which has cost so much in blood and torture to build up. You may be more of a gentleman than I, Mr. Hudders—Miss Watrous, here, far more of a lady than the Duchess of Sangazure, who has a disposition that wouldn't be tolerated in Billingsgate. Speaking of this young lady—why can't she accompany you as one of our guests? You're not married, I believe?"

"Faith—that's really most kind of Your Lordship! I fancy she might consider it—eh, lass?"

"Why—if the Earl really means it—and the Countess wouldn't object?"

Trevor laughed. "Jimmy told us you've a bit of garden, in back, Miss Watrous? Well—you'll get no peace from my wife until she's taken you through all her green-houses an' made a round of the forcing-beds. If you fetch along a suit of overalls, she'll pal around with you a lot. We're by way of being a busy crew, down in Devon—always messing with something. Er—by the way! Have you room for another lodger—say, for a fortn't or so? Jimmy Braithwaite was so jolly comfortable in the room you gave him that I know the man I've in mind would be entirely satisfied with it if the space happens to be available."

"Why—that room Mr. Jimmy had is the only one in the house which is vacant at present—we'd not thought of letting it. But any friend of your Lordship's would be welcome, of course—"

MINNIE had her own reasons for *not* wishing to let the room back of Hudders'—but His Lordship smilingly guessed them, and had far more compelling ones of his own for using that particular chamber—practically within arm's reach of Hudders'.

"Frankly, he is a friend. A middle-aged man of some education who has boned up in our Devon laboratories until he passed the London University exams as an electrical engineer. He'll be coming up to do a bit of experimental work at the Royal Society. I fancy he and Mr. Hudders would have many interests in common, because Soames is a fair mechanic as well. Very good! I'll be off, now, and let you both get your sleep. I'm running over to Antwerp for a day, by the early boat—but the Countess is in Park Lane just now, and will send you the invitations by first post. We quite appreciate your accepting them—really!"

AS this narrative deals chiefly with Hudders, M. P., and his intimates, there is little space for a detailed account of their week-end at Trevor Hall, some idea of which has been already indicated. And some taste of ephemeral greatness had come to him before that memorable visit. Upon the morning after his speech in the House, Minnie was almost incoherent with excitement when she fetched up the news-sheets with his breakfast.

"It's in all of them, Jase! You're by way of being a famous man! See! Your picture in the *Times*! Full reports of your speech and the way the people took it! I—I'm afraid you'll be getting too grand for us, now."

Turning away to the window, she dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief, while—like most of us under similar conditions—he had no thought for anything but what was being said of him in the news-sheets, and the unflattering half-tone portraits of him—resenting even the few bits of editorial sarcasm at his expense. He reached mechanically for the cup of tea and a bit of toast, as he read. Presently he sensed the fact, subconsciously, that there was an unusual stillness in the room—a vague impression of something not quite right. A faint sound like a muffled sob came from the window. It annoyed him. Deuce take the lass! Why must she come into his room to cry over some petty trouble when anyone could see that he had important matters on his mind—the comparison of Jason Hudders, as he knew the man, with this new celebrity whom some of the press Johnnies were misjudging in such a beastly unfair way! Presently—he wondered what she was crying about. It had to be stopped—that was all! Clumsily, he got out of his chair and went over to the figure by the window.

"There, there—lass! Buck up! What's it all about, anyhow?"

Turning slowly, she put her arms around his neck and buried her face in his old padded dressing-robe.

"Oh, Jase! I—I'm so proud of you! And when you go away from us to live in some grand house of your own, I'll just *die*! Of course I don't suppose I really will—but we'll miss you frightfully, lad!"

Some premonition made him suddenly thoughtful. It generally proves that a man who has the ability—even a young chap of thirty—to carry off an almost impossible situation as he had done the night

before, also has in him a foundation of common sense which does not permit of self-deception beyond a certain point. He frequently has sufficient vision to distinguish between temporary popularity and the more lasting respect which a man gains from that indomitable something which forces him on up in spite of all obstacles. Seeing, as he thought he did, the utter fallacy of the proposition he had succeeded in putting across in Parliament, he sensed a day of reckoning when his effort, brilliant though it unquestionably was, would be laughed at—and even his name soon forgotten unless he had the luck to do something of more consequence. It's the exceptional man who has this saving sense, mind you. There are countless others who accept every shred of adulation as their just due—and go down to oblivion like the stick of a rocket. He patted the girl's shoulder and rubbed his chin against her hair because nothing else occurred to him in the circumstances.

"Give heed to me for a bit, lass! I'd be a silly ass to leave this place when what happened last night may never happen again. The whips were dissatisfied—I saw that, an' I'll not be caring overmuch because they forced me into it with no real preparation. Well—d'ye see—that means I'll get no chance to address the House again, unless I try to introduce a bill without a plan which has been worked out in every detail, which of course I'll not do because it would be defeated overwhelmingly—lose all we've gained, so far, an' double that! It's pleasant in a way—this to-do about one in the press—but the same Johnnies would tear me to bits, like one of the cats in the zoo, if I but gave them an opening. So we'd best try to forget it as quickly as everyone else will."

"But, Jase—all the folk in our street below are agog with it! The baker and the milk-lad stopped to ask how the Member was this morning—and whether I'd wish an extra allowance for him. They seem to have the impression that great men eat more than us smaller folk. The chemist at the corner came to wait upon me at once, though there were others ahead—and told me to say that everyone was proud of you—that the workpeople of England had a champion, now, who understood his business!"

"Good Lord! Do they really believe that what I talked about can be actually pulled off?"

"Why—of course! Didn't you make the House believe it? Don't *you* believe it?"

Hudders groaned in exasperation.

"Not unless the whole world is made over on a different plan, and human nature changed beyond all recognition! When that happens, it'll be a place I don't wish to live in! Oh—some such scheme as limitation of the land a man may own might possibly work out in the next fifty or a hundred years—but I don't believe the very people who howl the loudest for that sort of thing would be willing to abide by any such restriction if they happened to be lucky in their commercial ventures!"

THE few days at Trevor Hall came and went—as red-letter ones in the lives of the women, at least. Many of their preconceived notions as to the way the toffs lived in their magnificent homes were shattered. Apparently they were very much like other folk—with the same interests, only a deal more of them. In comparing notes as to the activities of the Trevor family, the women admitted that they seemed to put in more hours of work, each day, than anyone they knew—and most of it was constructive work, of unquestioned benefit to all the people.

In this invitation to some of the prominent Labor Members, Earl Trevor had been sowing a few seeds which he was quite certain would sprout, eventually. He laughingly avoided argument with them upon the theories and demands of the Labor Party, saying that he was far too busy a man to mix in politics and had little taste for that sort of thing, anyway. He motored them down to see the experimental farms he had spoken about and gave them ample time to discuss the proposition with the three tenants—ladies included. Beyond that, he avoided being drawn into political argument. And the fruits of his little experiment began to appear when the Members' party returned to London, where the DoYLES and the John Boulders foregathered next evening to go over the grand time they'd certainly had. After a little, Mary Boulder had become thoughtful.

"Those farms of His Lordship's, now—take Murchieson, who was doing the best of the lot? Come five year, he'll be ownin' his land an' have a tidy sum put by in the bank. If Govern'm't do be taking over all of the land, like ye been talkin' about in Parliament, John—would Murchieson's land have to be taken over as well?"

"Aye—ye cannot take a thousand acres from one man an' leave another his twenty. All must be taken over."

"An' if the figures they gave was right, he'd be gettin' back but one an' seven-tenths acres when the land is distributed again?"

"Aye—but, d'ye see, Polly, everyone gets the same! As it is now, the rich few has their thousands of acres an' most of the people has none!"

"An' d'ye fancy they'd work as hard on the land as Murchieson, if they had it? Bah! 'Tis fool's talk! Ye well know they'd not! Take Martin—on the next farm! He's doin' well with it—but he'll not stick the five years! There's no whistle blowin' f'r 'im to knock off after his eight hours. There'll be no cinema-show or anythink in the way of 'alls nearer than Dartmouth—a long twelve mile'. His women an' even the lads'll not stand it. They'd rather draw their p'y in any city berth. But the Murchiesons have toiled an' saved to be independent—they're poor workin'-folk like ourselves. Yet ye would take from them all they've earned an' struggled for. 'Tis nobbut highway robbery, John! Take Minnie Watrous an' 'er mother—poor workin'-folk like us! Ye'd take from them the 'ouse they've saved an' struggled to buy—give 'em less than a two acres somewhere that'd be of no use to 'em! Man, man, ye Labor Members is daffy! Hudders was right—aye! Ye'll ne'er get anythink like that through Parliament unless ye've a clear plan that'll right such wrongs as them against yer own class!"

NOW—from the moment Hudders finished his speech in the House, Earl Trevor had foreseen an inevitable reaction against him among his own party. He had sensed a certain defiance in the man's underlying tone as if, having been compelled to do something he knew it a mistake to do, he meant to so clinch the thing in public that the mistake must be rectified before it was tried again by any of them—and he had certainly accomplished just that. There was now no possibility of jamming such a proposition through to a vote, hypnotizing enough of the Liberals to carry it, without protracted debate that would fully expose every impractical feature. In doing this, however, Hudders had assumed a personal risk which he failed to comprehend as clearly as the Earl of Dyvaint, who knew there were no limits to

what unscrupulous radicals would do when balked in their plans.

With this in mind, Trevor quickly found out, by a few questions here and there, not only who the more reckless Members were, but also the men in the background from whom they took instructions. So urgently did he explain what might be expected as a result of Hudders' speech that, inside of the next two hours, there were secret service men from Downing Street and Scotland Yard shadowing five men who had been seen talking with Members in the lobby of the House—following them to three different buildings in the more disreputable section of London which evidently were used as rendezvous and easily might be available for the indefinite detention of men whom the scoundrels desired to coerce, torture, perhaps kill, and slip their bodies into the near-by river.

Next evening Trevor—who might have been taken for a political of the lowest grade, or almost any denizen of the East End—stowed himself away with a Downing Street man in the attic of an old building at Wapping when the man, Holmebaugh, two of the Labor Members and a couple of radicals, came into the room beneath for a conference. Holmebaugh was self-controlled, but in a murderous frame of mind.

"There'll be no getting around the fact that Hudders has blocked us with that fine speech o' his so completely that we'll not be able to jam through any of the bills we meant to get. An' the time was exactly right for it! Could we ha' put some o' the Liberals to sleep a bit, we'd ha' got enough votes to carry the bills afore they knew what was happenin'. Now—they're but sittin' on the side-lines, thinkin' they're good sports, curse 'em! Watchin' us play our cricket! Waitin' f'r their own innings. Well—what's to do? Whether Hudders purposely said what he did to block us, or blundered into it, is beside the mark. What's done is done! The lad has ability! It might be he's enough of it to go before the House again wi' something that *looks* like a plan—sounds practical on the surface—an' jam it through to a vote. If he fails, we've nobody else with ability enough to gi' 'im a chance at it!"

"Hudders'll not do it! He flatly refused at first to make that speech—an' ye'll not get him to say another word until we've a workable plan!"

"Ah-h-hr—perhaps he will—before we're

through wi' 'im! There's things can be done wi' a lad like that—in a place like this! He'd best not be tellin' us what he will or wont do! If there's no handlin' 'im, he's standin' in our way to elect some other Member who will—an'—the river's but a few feet t'other side o' this wall! Better yet—he might shoot 'imself in 'is own diggings—aye! That would save a lot of bother—easy enough to spread a bit of scandal givin' reason enough f'r it. Aye—we'll just leave it that way. Either he does as he's bid wi' no argum't, or he commits suicide in 'is own room. I've an army revolver wi' a muffler that'll do the work quite neatly—then we put another one in the lad's hand, afterward."

ON the day after Minnie Watrous and Hudders returned from Devon, Soames—the electrician mentioned by Earl Trevor—presented his note of introduction and settled himself in the room back of the Member's. He appeared to be a quiet, rather fine-looking man who minded his own business and gave no trouble to anyone. Being invited into Hudders' room that evening, he proved to have an even better grasp of mechanics than the Member himself—and to have done a good deal of constructive thinking along the line of world-politics. Some of his contentions were what his host always had believed capitalistic fallacies—but when they came to argue the matter out upon a basis of fact and logic, he was forced to acknowledge that he got the worst of it. Soames admitted that he had assumed as all workmen did that the whole capitalistic scheme was wrong—until he tried to figure out something else as a practical substitute, and failed to do so. Coming into the room while they were talking, Minnie listened to them with absorbing interest. She liked her quiet lodger—and felt that he liked her. Soames presently asked if Hudders was a good shot—if he ever carried a weapon? But the Member said he'd enough of that during the war.

"All the same, Mr. Hudders, I'm thinking you'd best slip an automatic into your pocket when you go out. Seriously! That brilliant speech of yours made enemies in your own party—many of them. I've heard bits of talk. Well—among the real Laborites, I fancy you'd be safe enough, but we've a rotten lot of foreign reds mixed up with us—bounders who stop at nothing!"

Two nights later, Mrs. Watrous went to spend the night with her sister at Hampstead, and it happened to be the one occasion in a thousand when her other four lodgers were away for the week-end or staying with friends until morning. Soames tried to figure out whether any part of this could have been intentionally brought about, and learned from Minnie that some acquaintance had told her mother the sister in Hampstead was looking badly—reason enough to suggest the visit at once. It was possible that some suggestion might have induced one or two of the lodgers to remain away that night. At all events, the fact itself of the house being empty save for Hudders, Minnie and himself, was suspicious enough for him to take certain precautions. While Minnie was preparing a light supper for him, he went out and talked over the telephone a few minutes—telling her, afterward, that he expected three friends who would stay but a short time, and that he might possibly go out with them.

IN half an hour the girl admitted them below, and showed them up to his room—three well-behaved, respectable-looking men, something like Soames himself. About ten she also admitted five men to see Hudders—two of whom she recognized as fellow-Members, and another as the political—Holmebaugh. The other two she instinctively disliked at first glance. As she ushered them into the room—although they assured her they knew the way up—an expression of annoyance and disgust came into the Member's face.

Hudders had made inquiries which convinced him that the charge against the political had been well-founded. And when the girl was about to withdraw from the room, he stopped her:

"You needn't go, Minnie! Sit down with us and hear what these men have to say—you have a vote, you know. And I can't give them much time this evening because I've work to do."

Holmebaugh was about to raise a sharp objection—say that he had private matters to discuss, order her out. Then—a thought flashed through his mind, and he chuckled to himself instead.

"Aye—bide here wi' us, lass! Ye may hear something that'll be int'restin'."

The talk began peaceably enough with a plain statement that Hudders had blocked all of his party's plans and must think up

some way to undo his work in that direction, such as introducing a bill with some plan which looked possible on the surface whether it were actually workable or not—make another of his brilliant speeches, fogging the debate as they thought he had the skill to do, and pressing for an immediate vote.

Waiting until the big political was all through, Hudders flatly said that he'd do nothing of the sort—that he'd see them damned, first, if they were such fools that they couldn't see they were bound to lose out with any such tactics. There seemed nothing more to be said. In a moment or two, Holmebaugh suggested that the two Members might as well go home, leaving him and his two friends to argue the matter a bit further. After they left and Minnie had returned to the room, things began to happen too rapidly for the girl to understand just what was going on. One of the radicals seized her from behind—tied her arms and said that if she screamed, Hudders would be shot at once. Meanwhile an automatic was jammed against the Member's ribs while he was being tied to his chair. Then Holmebaugh sat down and leered at them in a cold-blooded way.

"Now we're in a little better position to argy this matter, Hudders. Ye'll give yer word to obey orders in every way—blindly—no argyment—or else!" (The piglike eyes narrowed to slits—the grin became that of a fiend.) "We slit the girl's throat before ye—put the bloody razor in yer 'and—knock ye senseless, as if ye'd stumbled an' 'it yer 'ead against the mantel—until we go out an' find a bobby, tellin' 'im we 'eard screechin', 'ere, as if murder was bein' done! Wot?"

Beads of perspiration came out upon Hudders' face, which went chalky white. As he watched the ruffian back of Minnie testing the edge of the razor with his thumb, his eyes blazed with insanity and he almost tore himself loose, as he shouted: "*You damned cur!*"

"An' if ye break yer word, we'll find other ways of killin' 'er when she's not expectin'—spreadin' scandal about her as well!"

IN the darkened back room which had been absolutely silent for an hour, Soames thought it too risky to let the mat-

ter go further—there was brooding tragedy in the air. Firing through the communicating closet he shot the automatic out of Holmebaugh's hand, carrying away the thumb as well—shot the razor from the hand of the man behind Minnie's chair—and stepped into the room, covering all three of them while the Inspector and two men from Scotland Yard followed him with handcuffs. The Inspector was evidently much pleased with the turn the affair had taken.

"We've been hoping to get you on some such charge as this, Holmebaugh—you and your precious reds! Much more certain conviction than arrests on a political charge!"

WHEN they were taken out of the house and Minnie had rubbed the numbness from her wrists, they saw the Member's head droop forward, realized that he had fainted—for the first time in his life. When dashes of cold water and a sip of brandy had revived him, he looked up from her shoulder with a faint smile:

"Dear lass! I never knew how much I cared—until they talked of killing you! In another moment, I'd have promised—anything they wished!" A sudden thought brought an expression of horror into his face. "I say! Soames, old chap! You don't fancy she may be in danger from other of that gang—still? What?"

"Probably not. Those two Members can be implicated in this if we wish, easily—and they know it. Word is sure to get around that if anything happens to either of you the whole party will be held responsible and there'll be a frightful lot of publicity. For their own sakes, they'll see that the reds keep their hands off both of you. Meanwhile, you'll get very little sleep in this place tonight. The Earl anticipated something like this—in fact, I think he had something of the sort in mind when he suggested my coming here. At all events, I'm told to fetch you both to his town house in Park Lane for a few days, until you've recovered a bit. And he said that if there happened to be a wedding there before you leave, he'll place his yacht at your disposal for a honeymoon week. Seemed to have the impression that Hudders may go far in a political career—with the right sort of wife."



Lights Reversed

A fine story of 1924 sailormen in Pacific waters, by a writer who has just returned from the Orient with a wealth of fresh first-hand material.

By WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

"I SAY, Captain! That's odd, y'know!" "What's odd, young man?" Captain Bowring came over to the starboard end of the bridge. His heavy white brows were bent in a frown upon young Mr. Yates, the second officer, who had the watch. Why in the nation did the Board see fit to officer the B-C freighters with these young men who had to run to their old captains every time something queer appeared on the horizon!

"What's odd, lad?" he repeated impatiently, as Mr. Yates seemed only suffused with blushes and silence.

"Why, that, sir," said Yates, pointing ahead over the dark sea. "It's our *Kandy*, I take it, sir—but she's coming into Colombo with her running-lights reversed!"

"My stars!" ejaculated Captain Bowring, who was a Yank; he raised his glasses for a look-see. He had just finished taking his own ship, the *Prome* of the B-C line, out of Colombo breakwater, and had been about to turn over the bridge to young Yates and go below. But this needed investigation. His glasses showed the house-number lights of the Burma-

Ceylon line on the stranger stringing down astern from her mainmast head. In front of them glared the foremast white light, but,—and here was the enigma,—below these two range-lights showed the red and green of port and starboard—but reversed!

A grin of triumph grew under the glasses as Captain Bowring snorted sardonically. It was the *Kandy*, Captain Anderson commanding, and coming into the world-port of Colombo a monumental example of carelessness, a scandal on the high seas!

Bowring had no use whatever for Captain Anderson, the first of the young captains in the prime of their forties whom it was now the policy of the Board to give command. Truly the old order out East had changed! It had all been a brotherhood of the Island Seas when Bowring was young, a period when nationality had nothing to do with it, and the experience of age alone counted. Britons, Yanks and Dutchmen were all given ships, impartially, and solely on their knowledge of the poorly charted waters. Now it was British captains for British-owned ships; and the free-lance who had got his knowledge of

harbors and landfalls by sailing into them with lead going and sketch-book in hand was no longer in demand. The islands were all well charted now.

Anderson commanded the *Kandy* now, promoted right over the head of Bowring's old friend Mr. Luttle, her first mate. That had been a blow, too. Captain Bowring came out of Salem, and Luttle from Portsmouth in old England; but that had not prevented the strong and firm friendship between the two during their years out East. A shame! Luttle had worked thirty years for a command! There was nothing against his record save his name, which Bowring admitted had no suggestion of command in it, but rather the mate type of officer; also he was handicapped by a certain sluggish-mindedness which was exasperating in so good a man.

But now this young whippersnapper, this Anderson, and on his first voyage too, was coming into Colombo a spectacle for gods and men. A laughingstock for all the Dutch, French, Japs and British alike anchored within the breakwater! Well, let him, mused Captain Bowring.

"Humph!" he ejaculated, lowering his glasses. "Rank carelessness, Mr. Yates! Some stupid *serang* may have gotten his red light in on the green plug, but it's astonishing that her watch officer hasn't noticed it."

"Mowst extraord'nary!" agreed Mr. Yates. "First thing of the kind in my experience!"

THE Captain snorted. "You *haven't* seen much, and that's a fact!" he growled. The old Yankee had an unreasoning hostility to Mr. Yates, who was a harmless young Englishman and a thorough seaman. It grew out of his dislike of *all* the young watch officers under him, all Britons, who on their part carefully concealed their dislike of *him*. He felt that they were all watching him, as a sort of anachronism whose days of the old free-for-all East were gone, and were merely waiting for him to die off or retire or something, so that they could get on. The Captain knew that the pressure in their own merchant marine was tremendous and pitiless. It galled him to think of a land in such contrast to his own America, this Britain where the under dog simply went on under without another chance; where old sea-captains were literally shoved off the bridge by young firsts and seconds and thirds, all urgently in

need of promotion so as to make both ends meet at home. They wanted him out—first as a Yankee who had no business here in command of an English ship, and next as an old fellow, no doubt entirely capable, but who *ought* to get out and give the younger men their chance.

Captain Bowring could not listen to either argument with any patience. Domineering and born to command himself, he had ruled and sailed ships and steamers since his first command in the nineties. He never made things easy with his youngsters but met their silent hostility with open and testy defiance.

"It's what you can expect of putting a mere boy of forty in charge of a ship," he told Mr. Yates. "If Luttle were in command, now—"

"Excuse me, sir, but I think he *has* the bridge on the *Kandy* now," Mr. Yates made bold to interrupt. "I happen to know their watch bill, sir."

"Sure about that?" questioned Bowring sharply.

"Yes sir. I saw their bill in Rangoon. Mr. Luttle has the eight-to-twelve, sir, as is usual with us with the Number One."

The Captain reflected that this was so in the British service. It introduced complications. To let Anderson go on in and make a monkey of himself would be glorious, but not with his old friend Luttle also hopelessly involved as watch officer at the time. It was now ten o'clock,—his watch—and the lights of the big hotel on Galle Face were glowing dimly above the beach ashore, and the lighthouse winking dead abeam. The oncoming steamer was still nearly a mile ahead of them, her two running-lights mere points of red and green, and the foremast light gleaming high above them. That showed her as heading for them—but why with port and starboard reversed? And why on Luttle's watch, of all men?

The Captain stood awhile watching them, red where green should be and green where red, puzzling. There was real danger in it, too, for any steamer coming out of the breakwater at this hour. If she saw red to her starboard, she would inevitably turn to starboard herself—and run right into the *Kandy*.

Not much likelihood of anyone coming out at this hour, though, Bowring reflected. The liners all left at noon, the tramps at seven. The ships remaining at anchor would be clustered about with native light-

ers loading on tea and rubber, with piratical Klings and Tamils running the winches, dozens more of them swarming in the hold, more yet shouting from the rails—a noisy bedlam that would go on all night under the glare of cargo lanterns. No; it would be quite safe to let Anderson go on in—to the astonishment of watch officers on the naval ships, the ribald hails from his merchant *confrères*, and the indignation of port officers, who would proceed to hold inquiry and take his license away from him. Anderson would *never* get over the uproarious reception Colombo would give him! He would go down and under; and the story be a luscious joke told around the Marine Club tables in every port from Bombay to Singapore!

THINKING of jokes, the Captain reflected that he had a score to settle with Anderson too. Anderson had an acid wit and a Hibernian humor which made him very popular with the younger set, and once he had made Bowring feel the edge of that wit. It was at a Marine Dinner ashore, a cheerio party in which Bowring had presided as senior, and all the juniors had got maudlin drunk. The youngsters had been excessively funny with him that night, and Anderson had proposed the toast: "To the good old method of chronometer-sight navigation, boys—and to its sole living adherent!"

All the boys had laughed uproariously and raised their glasses to old Bowring, at that. A little thing, but Lord, how it rankled! Captain Bowring *did* shoot the sun at eight bells for his chronometer sight in the old way, while all the younger men used the new azimuth method; but, "Jerusha's cats!" he would exclaim when some sly reminder of it was poked at him. "It gets your reckoning just the same, don't it?" A laugh and a shrug; why hang onto it, these days, when the Marc St. Hillaire method was so much easier!

The two ships neared each other, those enigmatical lights on the *Kandy* still showing. Captain Bowring began to waver, now that the moment of their passing was come. The oldest rule of the sea, professional loyalty to its stern traditions, was rising up to confront him. It was *never* right to let go by a serious situation like this! Anderson *might* come into Colombo without colliding with anybody coming out, but there *was* a chance. The rules of the sea forbade *any* chance being taken.

"Green to green, and red to red," was unbreakable. Any ship coming out would follow that rule with the *Kandy*, and there would be a smash, with her lights as they were. No; it was a glorious chance to get even, just to let him pass with the usual prolonged blast of greeting—but it would never do!

As the two ships passed, Captain Bowring turned to Mr. Yates: "Give that young fool the four toots, Mr. Yates," he ordered with a shrug of exasperation. It was galling to let this go; but there was his plain duty to the sea, to warn this brother-captain.

Yates pulled the whistle-cord, and four short blasts hooted out from the *Prome*. The *Kandy* acknowledged it—but with just the usual answering whistle!

"Hosts of Pharaoh!" ejaculated Bowring in his Yankee twang as she swept on astern. "What ails the man! He hasn't changed them, even yet!"

Mr. Yates was silent, murmuring something like his usual, "Mowst extraordinary!"

Bowring jumped to the whistle-cord and blew four short, impatient blasts. It means, "Look to your lights!" but the *Kandy* kept right on, ignoring him entirely. She was steaming on to Colombo, only her house lights and her foremast light now showing, the mystifying red and green shut off from view by their screens. She was taking Anderson on in, to derision and downfall, in spite of his signal; and yet—his own responsibility was with him still!

"Now, what in the nation? What do you make of that, Mr. Yates?" Captain Bowring asked his second. "Can't be mutiny, can it? Or an uprising by the deck coolies she's bringing down from Rangoon? Sho!" he answered his own question. "They *might* seize the deck; but how about the engineer force? Scotch, and hard-boiled as granite, every hoot-mon of them! They'd never run the engines for any natives! Yet only natives could have got those lights in wrong."

"Hadn't we better wireless her about her lights, sir?" asked Mr. Yates. "She has still an hour before Colombo."

THE Captain walked away to the port bridge lookout without answering. An idea had come to him out of this mystery, and he wanted time to think it over. This reversal of her lights was *not* accidental, nor through carelessness, nor stupidity of

native *serangs*—it was intentional! The man who did it wanted the same thing he did, to bring down Captain Anderson in a roar of derision on his first entrance into Colombo. And that man had *not* had the courage to consider well the serious aspects of this thing, its danger to outcoming steamers, its tampering with the rules of the sea. He had taken a chance on that. And his old friend Luttle, disappointed and desperate over the lost ambition of his life, had this watch on the *Kandy*!

"Why, the old fool!" muttered Captain Bowring bitterly. "It's his doing, of course! Soon he calls Anderson to take her in, and around the breakwater they go, to make immortal fools of themselves! Can't he see that, while he brings down Anderson, he ruins himself too?"

The whole thing seemed the more stupid and dull-witted and unforgivable as Bowring studied it. That dependable old Luttle could stoop, for any personal motives whatever, to tampering with the stern and inviolable laws of the sea! That was the really unpardonable part of this!

"Oh, Luttle, Luttle, Luttle!" murmured the captain wearily, shaking his head. Mr. Yates was coming across the bridge. The *Kandy* was half a mile astern now, and soon would make the turn around the point and head for Colombo breakwater. The moment when anything wise and deep and big-minded could be done was passing. To wireless her would always be feasible, but it was the weak and thoughtless thing to do, Bowring felt. Everyone on the *Kandy* would know about it as soon as young Sparks got the message.

"No; we'll *not* wireless her, Mr. Yates," said the Captain, turning to meet his junior office. "We'll have to do better than *that*! Stop the ship, sir! Have the bosun send up distress signals, a V \acute{e} ry light and a rocket."

He turned away, leaving the astonished Mr. Yates to jump to the engine telegraph signaling "Stop!" and then hurry from the bridge in search of the bosun. Captain Bowring laid his plans with Yankee can-niness as he paced the *Prome's* bridge alone. The distress lights would bring Luttle and the *Kandy* back. With the two ships near each other and stopped, and Captain Anderson coming over in a boat to make inquiries, he would have cards in his hand to play.

He watched the *Kandy* astern off Point Galle. Ashore the distant limestone cliffs

and towering citadels of rock of the Ceylon hills showed in faint white and black under the haze of strong tropical starlight. Below that was the dark line of shore, a fringe of blurred black palm-tops over a thin white line which was coral beach and surf. A faint glow told of the Galle Face hotel, that vast brick caravanseraï where wealthy tea-planters, rubber men and officers of Colonial regiments were dining and drinking. There would be a stir amongst them when those rockets went up, but no one would ever know why.

THE *Kandy's* red light had now reappeared. She had turned to starboard, and Luttle was bringing her back to see what ailed his old friend Bowring. Queer, thought Captain Bowring, that he had not even yet straightened out his lights, now that his dull-witted and unworthy plot had been perforce given up to help the *Prome*. His own ship rolled motionless on the smooth swells of the Indian ocean, her screw stopped. The green glare from the V \acute{e} ry light up in the bows turned to a ghastly white the hawklike features of the Captain, crossing and recrossing her bridge, wondering, fighting against his suspicions, sorrowfully puzzling over it all.

The *Kandy* came up rapidly, and presently slowed down, while the distant commotion of a boat being called away,—her bosun's pipe shrilling and the hail, "Gig-crew, lay aft, there!"—floated out from her.

Sounds of oar-beats; then a hail, in a pleasant young voice, from the waters below. "*Prome* ahoy! I say, what's wrong with you fellows?"

After all, there was loyalty to the line in young Anderson, thought Bowring. It was a fairly big line for freighters, six ships; and it had developed an *esprit de corps* which centered around the symbol on their funnels, a white B-C joined by a white bar through both letters. Anderson might not like him personally, as a Yank and an anachronism, but he was quick to report for help when any of their line got into trouble.

"Will you be good enough to come up on my bridge, Captain Anderson?" called down Bowring from the port lookout. "I want to see you here—alone." That last for the benefit of the loungers, watch-officers and crew, of his own ship now lining the rails, all agog with curiosity over this mysterious stoppage and the distress lights.

Soon a youngish officer came running up

the bridge gangway. He was in blue uniform, as was Captain Bowring, with the same three stripes of the commander on his sleeve, the upper stripe laid over in the merchant-marine lozenge in place of the curl of the Royal Navy. Anderson's was a long and pleasant face, suggesting Irish ancestry in the features; he had a habit of cocking his head on one side like a terrier when getting off the joke or the good quip in which his keen wit delighted.

He greeted Captain Bowring with a smile and his head on one side waggishly. "What's wrong? Nothing out with the good old chronometers, I hope, is there?"

Bowring stifled the impulse to come back at him. "Have you noticed your running-lights, Anderson?" he asked in a more kindly tone than he usually addressed all Britons.

Anderson bit his lip; so that was it?

"I have!" he retorted vexedly, in his dry and businesslike tones. "I saw my red light to starboard the minute we cleared the ship in the gig. Young Jackson will jolly well get the sack for it! I'm suspending him from duty as soon as I get back," he went on in his rapid-fire speech.

"*Jackson!*" exploded Captain Bowring. Young Jackson, their third, had this watch, not Luttle! This upset everything! "I—I thought Luttle had this watch!"

"*Did you!*" said Anderson sweetly and with a mind-your-own-business air. "How you old fellows hang together! I take it you brought me back, then, to get him out of trouble?"

A FURIOUS anger flared up in Bowring, but he stifled it. The ungrateful hound! "No," he interrupted, "I wanted to get you *all* out of trouble, Captain Anderson. You know what the port officers would do to *you* if you came into Colombo with your lights reversed, don't you?"

Again Anderson bit his lip; he, as captain, would be the one to face the inquiry and take the major part of the blame. It would have meant the end of his career as a master out here. But his anger grew all the more bitter against his watch-officers because of it. Good heavens! A captain couldn't be everywhere and see to everything!

"Jolly decent of you, *that!*" he came back dryly. "But it will not save young Jackson, nor Luttle either. He has the four-to-eight now; and it was on *his* watch that the lights were set."

Once more Captain Bowring stood completely taken aback—as the hideous truth was forced in upon him by this news. Luttle was not such an old fool, after all! He had changed those lights *before* going off watch, knowing that the hair-brained and happy-go-lucky Jackson would never think to go out and look to them. He would assume, of course, that the dependable old mate had set them properly, and would never give them a thought. Then the opera-bouffe entry into Colombo, and the inquiry, in which Luttle could swear—that they were all right when *he* turned over the bridge!

Oh, it was hard to forgive! Almost as low-down as his deliberate tampering with the rules of the sea to get up his wretched plot. To what measures men were driven in the fight for a bare existence! This trick would have gotten Luttle his promotion—but by the methods of the crook. It was indecent, the crowding that made men stoop to that! A wave of homesickness swept over Captain Bowring. Oh, to be out of it and retire! He had enough. He could quit any time. But how about Luttle? *He* had not even a competence, but instead a large family at home which ate up his wages as fast as made. That was only a material consideration, however; if their friendship was to continue, be restored, he *must* be given a chance to retrieve and come back, morally! Bowring still had the cards in his hands, but how to play them he was at a loss. He sparred for time:

"I gave him the four toots—twice. Then set distress lights to bring you back," he explained.

"Didn't wireless me personally, so as to keep it quiet and have it out with me about Luttle, eh?" said Anderson keenly. "Well, it was good of you, Bowring, but will not save either of them. If Jackson was so hair-brained as to take your signal for a sort of cheerio greeting, he can practice his thoughtlessness on some other ships than ours. As for Luttle—abominable carelessness! That idiotic *serang* of his watch got them in wrong, of course, and he never noticed. We can't have such men about, Bowring!"

"*Can't we?*" retorted the older man. "Luttle's a dependable old fellow. I've known him thirty years; and—hosts of Pharaoh, no man can accuse *him* of carelessness! And now I'm going to let you in on something, Anderson: Do you think

there could have been any—motive—in all this?"

THE younger man stood for some moments staring at him hard.

"By Jove!" he burst out, breathing heavily, his nimble mind grasping the whole thing instantly under the suggestion of that one word *motive*. Then, "By God!" he gasped angrily.

"Hard to forgive, aint it?" said Bowring, relapsing into Yankee in the tensity of the feeling which gripped him. "But we're goin' to, you and I! We're goin' to give him another chance—"

"Not in ten thousand years!" barked Captain Anderson heatedly. "I might overlook his cowardly attempt to make an ass of me coming into Colombo with my lights reversed—which you were good enough to frustrate, Captain; but that a man should be so lost to the honor, the traditions, to the inexorable requirements of the sea as to tamper with such serious things as running-lights—"

Captain Bowring was looking about him wildly. If ever man needed help, *he* did at that moment! To save Luttle against this inexorable logic, to give the man a chance to save himself—how? *How?* And the Good Lord, who has a way of sending help when it is most needed, was doing just that, now—for a strange steamer was poking her nose around the point to the east.

"Thank God!" he muttered reverently. "Look there, Captain!"

"Thank God?" echoed Anderson, amazed, and looking out with him over the bridge-rail at the stranger's lights across the dark sea. "Are you mad, Bowring? Yon's a real danger! I must get back to my ship immediately, before he rams us with our lights as they are," he said excitedly, and making a move to hurry from the bridge.

Bowring detained him. "Yes, thank God!" he exclaimed with yet more fervor. "It's what I hoped for, prayed for, when I brought you back. Not much chance of you meeting anyone coming out of Colombo, but, another ship, coming *in*—"

"Good God, let me go, Bowring! You're just talking sentimental drivell!" yelled Anderson, struggling to free himself from Bowring's grip on his arm.

"That fellow'll collide with us, directly! Let me go, I say!"

"No; he won't!" said Bowring, unmoved and still holding the younger captain in his iron grip. "It's Luttle's chance, man!

And by God, you're going to give it to him! —Hold still!"

The stranger had slowed down and was now blowing three blasts at the two ships facing him—one with her running-lights all wrong—and asking them what all this meant.

And as they watched, the red light on the *Kandy* went out and a green one took its place an instant later. Then two short blasts came from her whistle. They meant, "Pass me to starboard!"—the true starboard, this time! The stranger came on confidently, passed, and was gone into the night.

The two captains stood side by side on the *Prome's* bridge, watching tensely that little drama being played out on the *Kandy*. Bowring, as surely as if he had been there, saw his old friend Luttle give up, in that simple action, all that he owned in the world, his reputation, his last chance for further employment on the high seas, his livelihood, his future—all at the inexorable call to come forward and be a man when a danger of the sea actually faced his own ship. It gave Bowring at least a fine and noble gesture to work with in his fight to save Luttle, but he turned and faced Anderson, the young and efficient and hard-headed, without much hope.

"Well!" said the latter after a pause. "At least he was decent enough to do *that*—and before them all, too! But I can't see that it helps him much, after all. No man would be swine enough to hang back, with that steamer actually facing us and giving us the three blasts. The fact remains, Captain Bowring, that our old friend—oh, good Lord!" he gave up hopelessly.

"Hard to forgive, I'll admit," agreed Bowring. "But let's see if we can't. Don't let's be *too* efficient, Captain Anderson! I'd let young Jackson off with a reprimand, first. Who ever heard of any *serang* getting in his lights wrong before? And how often have *you* ever been given the four blasts? Not once, in all your time at sea, have you? And so, might not think of your lights at all, when a boat of your own line greeted you with a string of hoots. Might not even count 'em—hey?"

ANDERSON nodded somberly. He was not convinced; neither did he want to argue it, now.

"And now about Luttle," went on Captain Bowring, drawing a long breath. "It wont be long before all us old fellows are

gone, will it? And you yourself, Anderson, an old fellow, with the firsts and seconds around you looking at you like a ring of hungry cats at a mouse—and hoping you'll trip, somehow, so they can get on. Now put yourself in Luttle's place, with a younger man already jumped over your head—and see if this temptation would not come to you—"

"Oh, come, now!" demurred Captain Anderson, smiling.

"Incredible, aint it? Of course you're mighty virtuous, at your age! *You're* not on the down-slide of life! But, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,' says the Word. Christ, he knew how weak we all are! Not for nothin' did He put that into our daily prayer! Look into your heart, Captain Anderson, and see if you can't forgive a disappointed and desperate old man," Bowring pleaded, his voice rich with compassion and pity and the spirit which can see that a man's still a man, for all he's met the devil and been downed.

"I want you to give Luttle another chance," he said softly, persuasively. "Jest ferget the whole thing—and shut up them young fellers, if Luttle's been fool enough to change them lights without pretendin' that he'd noticed it for the first time—as *I'd* have done. Will you?"

The junior captain considered, his breath coming quick, his emotions at last aroused. "Damme if it isn't jolly decent of you, all this, Yank!" he said with energy and a certain admiration in his tones. "*I might* let it go—" He hesitated. "But dash it, how are we going to manage it? The thing's out, now, before them all, if I know Luttle! He hasn't your canniness, Bowring—no horse sense. And hang me if I'll sail with him another trip! It would be rather awkward, wouldn't it, setting him ashore in Colombo without explanations, even if I could avoid an inquiry?"

"Oh, that's all right!" laughed Bowring happily. "You transfer him to *me*, right now! Luttle's met temptation, and been weak, and has come back like a man—but, dang me if he still don't need a nurse! I'll send you Adair, my first. . . . Another thing: I'm getting tired of being the only Yank in this line. One of us old fellows has got to get out, and it might as well be me. There'll be something for me to do at home, where it aint so crowded. But Luttle, he has *no* chance, unless I give it to him. Never had a ship, never *will* get one, if things stay as they are. So I'll take him up to Rangoon with me, and have a talk with the Board—and the old Yank will clear out and the old Briton get the *Prome*, a British ship. How about it?"

CAPTAIN ANDERSON was breathing fast and thickly. He was listening with astounded ears to this—to an Englishman—extraordinary proposal; and from a man who could still see hope for an old swine who had plotted to bring down his captain in disgrace, who had callously proposed to let the innocent third suffer with him, and who, most unpardonable of all, had broken the iron-clad traditions of the sea—*never* to tamper with anything that had to do with the Rules of the Road.

"By Jove, you're *big*, Yank!" he burst out. "He's not worth a farthing of all you're doing for him; but of course, if *you* can see it that way, it's not for me—you may be right—he *was* decent about the lights!" he ended confusedly.

They gripped hands. Captain Bowring was too moved to speak.

"Shall we say in half an hour?" asked Anderson, returning to his brisk and urbane air again. "Have Adair get ready; I'll send Luttle over in the gig—and hush up any talk."

Captain Bowring nodded, and again they shook hands, and parted.

A New Madagascar Novelette

H BEDFORD-JONES, whose thrilling stories of adventure off the little-known coast of Madagascar have evoked so much enthusiasm from our readers, will contribute a new and even more enthralling story of this type to the next issue. "What Is Written Is Written" is the title; and along with fourteen lively companions it will appear, remember, in our forthcoming December number.



Little Rescuer

Baseball, the circus and a love affair supply some specially interesting ingredients to this winning story by the author of "Paul Revere's Bride."

By JACK CASEY

MAYBE if the truth were known, Ezekiel, Hezekiah and many of the old prophets were subconscious prophets writing what their subconscious minds dictated, not what consciously they expected to happen. It is quite a leap from Zeke, Hezzy and the other old boys who prognosticated in the Biblical League to Eddie Bellew and the Whales. And it is probably saying a lot to speak of a ball-player's subconscious mind, when any umpire will bet you his mask and both dim eyes that you mean his unconscious mind. But you have to drop the laurel wreath on the skull that's earned it. Eddie Bellew not only prophesied correctly but fulfilled his own prophecy, which is a circuit clout in any league.

It came about through Eddie losing his girl and hopping into the mystic league to find her. For a reason best known to himself, Eddie Bellew had seen a promising romance, involving himself and the girl of girls, suddenly go as dead as a line-drive which lands foul. Here was Eddie, and somewhere was the girl. But where? Tea-leaves and palmistry failing to locate her,

Eddie had gone in for crystal-gazers. You meet him leaving the red-striped tent of Mme. Daisy De Pisa in Luna Park, five miles out of Hot Springs, spring training-camp of the Whales. Shuffling out of the tent is Eddie, his big shoulders hunched forward, hands deep in trousers pockets, a frown creasing his noble brow, when he heard—

"Ha, ha, ha ha-a-a, caught in the act!"

Before him stood the Shrimp, grimacing, thunder-voiced, hungrily eying an oilcloth sign displaying Mme De Pisa in no modest fashion as the revealer of things hidden, the prophet of events to come.

"Ah, ha-a-a, flirting with the gods."

The Shrimp executed a noble jig, then with outstretched arms pleaded mockingly to the sign.

"Oh lady," he cried, "who shall I marry? Is she-e-e light? Or is she-e-e-e dark-k-k-k? Shall-l-l-l I cross water? Shall-l-l I. . . ."

Bellew mouthed him with a generous palm. "Shut-up, you runt," he growled, red of face. "What's the matter—you crazy?"

The Shrimp broke away. "Am I crazy?" He laughed scornfully. "That's a fine question for a left-hander coming out of a fortune-teller's tent to ask! What'd you lose, your fast ball? Oh-h-h, how the gang will love this." The Shrimp roared.

"Don't you dare!" said the big pitcher. "Now, Jim, please." His voice became a whine. "Please, Jim!" He advanced with a worried look. "Just a little private matter."

"Sure, I know," said the Shrimp confidentially. "Is she any good?"

"Great!" said Bellew, regaining confidence. "Best yet!"

"Honest?"

"On the level."

"What does she charge?"

"Two bucks."

"That's a lotta jack."

"I know, but she's worth it."

"What'd she tell you?"

Bellew gazed down the street toward approaching team-mates, then maneuvered the Shrimp away from the betraying sign and the spot of his arrested exit.

"What'd she tell you?" The Shrimp was anxious.

"Promise you wont tell?"

"Not a word. Honest, Eddie!" The little second-string catcher crossed his throat with a disjointed forefinger, a mute pledge of truthfulness remembered from boyhood—which, interpreted, meant, he'd be stricken dumb if he did so.

With the seriousness of a race-track tout letting one in on a feed-box tip, the big pitcher bent down to the left ear of the sawed-off catcher and answered softly: "Said I was going to get me a beautiful doll."

"How?"

The pitcher thought fast. "Rescue her," he said mysteriously.

"Rescue her?" The Shrimp spoke in awe.

Bellew nodded.

From what?"

Bellew hesitated; then leaning over with a grin he shouted:

"An elephant."

Grasping the rim of the Shrimp's soft hat with his huge hands, he yanked it down with a sudden jerk, and laughing gloriously, walked away, leaving the little catcher spluttering with rage as he endeavored to dislodge a hat-band painfully tucked down over generous ears.

CHALK up an error for Bellew. He had safely wheeled the Shrimp away from the entrance to the fortune-teller's tent as he noticed five of his team-mates leave a shooting gallery not twenty feet away. He had outguessed the Shrimp, played with him, then left him in the most maddening of all predicaments, with a seven and one-quarter head jammed into a size seven hat. He knew the Shrimp would tell the boys, figuring he would be joshed for a day or two, and that then the incident would be forgotten. But he erred. In his brief speech with the little catcher he had used *one* wrong word. He had said, "Rescue," which was the one word Bellew should never have associated with himself. Fourteen times during the season before, he had left a runner stranded on third base with two out when a hit would have brought in a run, and in six games it turned out the winning run. He was a pitcher, so wasn't expected to bat like an outfielder, but it was a bad break on his part to portray himself as a rescuer. He had proved anything but that. As the Whales had lost the pennant the previous season by five games, its loss was blamed to Bellew. Even though he had not come to the team until August, he was shown by a venerable baseball statistician to have been the poorest rescuer of base-runners in the league, a man who single-handed had lost a pennant. Slippery Magee, third baseman, chortled when the Shrimp spread the news.

"Little Rescuer!" he yelled.

The name stuck to Bellew as if put on with a plaster.

"Little Rescuer," sang the telegraph wires the following night as Eddie Curran, father of baseball scribes and noble humorist of them all, "served" Bellew to a million-odd readers. He served him as a rescuer, a mahout, a keeper of the "bulls," as elephant-trainers are known; he joshed him, burlesqued him, praised him, south-pawed him, interviewed him and poked fun at him in a column story crackling with wit. Exchange papers picked up the story, and it was printed from coast to coast. Forever after fans knew Eddie Bellew only as "Little Rescuer." Newspaper men voted it the best spring training-camp story ever written. But for Eddie Bellew its consequences were painful.

HE immediately wanted to exterminate the Shrimp—to do a nice, thorough carving job upon him, as his Sunday-school

teacher used to tell him heathens did upon brave missionaries on the Sunday they took up a collection for those still uncarved. Nothing would have pleased Bellew more than to remove the Shrimp's features right down to his necktie, or unscrew his ears. But he did nothing. The Shrimp was simply the Shrimp, and no battering would ever cure him of the prying ways he had inherited from a father who had departed this life while hunting a gas-leak with a lighted candle. And it wasn't the Shrimp's fault if Bellew had left himself open to criticism by his weakness at bat. Of course the Shrimp could have kept his mouth shut, and nobody would have known of the wise crack he had made about a rescue. But after he had jammed the Shrimp's lid over his bulging bean, you really couldn't blame him for staggering to the boys with such tidings of joy. It was all in the game, but it was hard to take.

Then there was the tragedy of Alice—again his own fault! Alice was the only girl—that is, she had been, until she dropped from sight. Where had she gone? Why had she not written? For the answers Bellew had invaded mystic leagues. Foolish, of course, to believe that fortune-tellers could really help a fellow find a girl, but it had been hard to lose Alice. He thumbed a portrait of her that always made the circuit with him. It revealed a smiling, dimpled girl easy to look at, a girl with black bobbed hair, big eyes and the least bit of sauciness about a full-lipped mouth. Bellew's heart thumped when he looked into those big eyes, and his thoughts went roving back to the Sally League and Mother Byrnes' boarding-house, where he had won her.

It was a boarding-house which catered to members of the local ball-team, in season, and theatrical folk. Not a boarding-house in the sense of the North, but rather an old-time Southern mansion thrown open originally to "paying guests," its high-ceilinged rooms full of Confederacy ghosts, and its physical being permeated with a century-old atmosphere of the proud, sunny and hospitable South.

Behind a fragrant creeper vine on the vast old front porch, while a big yellow moon crept up the sky, Alice Byrnes had given herself to Bellew. It had been a bigger moment in his life than his only no-hit, no-run game, that moment when he kissed the girl's soft full lips, then buried his face in her dark, perfumed hair. They

had become engaged on the spot, she the last of a famous old family of vaudeville and circus performers, he a budding young giant of a baseball pitcher.

Mother Byrnes had been left stranded in that very house twenty-one years before, when her baby was a month old. Jimmy Byrnes, her husband, had suffered a dizzy spell and fallen from a trapeze to his death before a shocked night audience at the circus. The wife and mother widowed by the tragedy was then in the ballet, a member of the troupe. She became Mother Byrnes when years later she took over the boarding-house she had remained to work in, since the night of her husband's death. She had been ailing about the time Bellew won Alice. When a Big League scout wished him onto the Whales as the most promising busher of the previous year, and he had come up in late August to assist in a pennant dash, Mother Byrnes was in bed under the care of a specialist.

"How I wish she were well and I were going with you!" Alice had said.

"If you only were!" the big pitcher had sighed, and then added thoughtlessly: "Still, a separation is good. It makes you sure you won't make any mistake."

Only when the girl recoiled had Bellew realized the brutality of the remark. "I didn't mean it the way it sounded, sweetheart—honest!" he had apologized. "I don't mean we need a separation. What I meant was we've been together so much, been so happy, and—well—" He had floundered to a stop, embarrassed.

"Good-by, Eddie," she had said.

He had written three times to make amends. The last letter, written six weeks after he got into the Big Show, had been returned. He then learned that her mother had died, and that she had sold the lease on the home and left Birmingham. Where she had gone he did not know.

He had cursed himself over and over for what he called "the bone I pulled" in making that remark. He was hungry for her, hungry for her, every hour of the day. He needed her, needed her as much as an umpire needs eyes, needed her support more than a fast ball pitcher needs an outfield. And it was all the more tragic to him that she could follow his fortunes through the newspaper box-scores, while he could learn nothing of her. He had given her a diamond. He wondered if she still wore it—wondered and wondered through a long winter.

With her photograph in his hand Bellew gazed off into space and dreamed. Then suddenly he laid it down, and did not care. Alice had evidently suffered a change of heart, had ceased to care for him. Or—and he perked up at the thought of it—had she felt the call of the stage or sawdust ring, a call three generations old in her blood? Her mother had sensed it coming and fought it while she lived. Had Alice tried it when death had removed this obstacle? He laughed bitterly. Let her go! Let the boys have their laugh over "Little Rescuer." He should worry!

THE team broke training and started on a barn-storming trip North. They would open in Detroit. Maybe, thought Bellew, the rescue joke would be forgotten. But it wasn't. In every minor league city visited as the team moved North, the fans picked on Eddie Bellew. Seemingly everybody knew of him. When the club struck town, there would immediately appear in a local newspaper a rehash article of Eddie Curran's famous story. No sooner would he join the pitchers warming up before the game, than there would come shouts of—

"Oh, you Little Rescuer."

"Save me, baby, save me!"

"Oh, you Rescue Mission!"

Thirty thousand shrieking fans attended the opening game in Detroit, and not half of them neglected to shriek at Eddie Bellew. Sarcasms, chortled in huge glee, boomed onto the diamond from thousands of rasping throats. He chewed on a chunk of spruce gum and tried to appear indifferent as he warmed up in front of the grandstand with four other brawny twirlers. Nonchalantly he raised his left arm, wound up and zipped the ball to the Shrimp, who with Mooney, third-string catcher, was warming up the pitchers. The old hop was on his fast one, and it smacked into the Shrimp's big mitt with a pistol-like pop.

"Let 'em rave!" he thought. Seemed as though they had been waiting for the precious opening day for the explicit purpose of picking on him.

"Gabriel, blow your horn."

That was a wise crack. The crowd took it up. They chanted it, beating time with their feet.

"Gabriel, blow your horn. You're the rescuin' angel kid!"

A fast one went wild and bounded off the wire netting of the grandstand. The Shrimp yelled to Bellew that he had crossed

him on signals. The crowd roared in high glee.

Jim Dolan, the Whales manager, came out from the dugout, his three chins rippling rhythmically. When the manager's chins rippled, he was agitated. "Better call it a day," he said crisply, facing Bellew.

"What for?"

"You're slippin'," he replied.

"Slippin', my eye!" said Bellew hotly.

"You almost threw that last one over the stands."

"I was tryin' a spitter," was Bellew's lame retort.

Dolan eyed him keenly. "Wanna work?" he asked.

"Certainly I wanna work."

"Lemme see what yuh got?"

Bellew tossed half a dozen fast ones, a floater and a couple of curves.

"All right," said the fat manager. He motioned the other pitchers to the bench.

"He wont last three innings," he told Johnny O'Hare, veteran coach and member of the Whales' board of strategy, "but I like a game guy."

Johnny spat reflectively. "I thought that rescue stuff would be forgotten by the time we got North."

"That'll never be forgotten as long as this bird plays baseball," said Dolan emphatically. "He can live it down like Merkle did that no-touch-second stuff if he stays game, but I don't know. Never tell about a left-hander."

FIFTEEN minutes after the game started, Bellew was under the showers. He had had a lot of stuff on the ball, but not for anybody at the home plate. To the jeers of "Little Rescuer!" chanted by the mob, he had walked four men in succession. Murphy, the big first-string catcher, had almost dislocated his arms knocking down wild pitches, while the fans recommended a butterfly net.

Bellew wept while he bathed, clenching his fists and gritting his teeth. "They wont get me, though," he muttered in a frenzy. "I'll fight 'em, every doggone one of 'em, in every city on the circuit."

The Whales made a complete swing of the West, playing a series of games in each of four cities. Dolan, shrewd judge of men, let Bellew start against every club the Whales faced.

"A good left-hander's worth losing a few ball games for," he told O'Hare. But in St. Louis, when Bellew throwing to first

base to catch a runner napping, beamed a fan in the grandstand, Dolan scratched his head. "I don't know," he sighed. "That's wild even for a left-hander."

Bellew tried hard, but his heart was leaking out of the job. To be razzed by fans occasionally is one thing; to be ragged unmercifully in every city you play ball in, is unbearable. The harder he tried to pitch, the worse he got. He had been considered a find the season before when bought from the Birmingham Club, had taken his turn in pitching assignments and won games from the start. He had a graceful style much like Wilbur Cooper of the Pirates when working under favorable conditions. The smoothness of his delivery had been much commented upon. But now he was pitching with motions that were jerky. It was a sign that his confidence was ebbing. Physically he went through the motions of pitching, but mentally he was through.

The strain he was working under almost caused a riot one evening in a Chicago hotel. Bellew had pitched that day. For five innings he had worked nicely, then blown up with a loud report when a leather-lunged fan back of third base suddenly shouted:

"The rescue mission will now open services by singing Hymn 46, entitled, 'When Little Eddie Bellew.'"

That night, sitting in the hotel lobby, a worried frown on his face, Bellew flew into a violent fit of anger when a rookie outfielder out of the goodness of his heart handed the big pitcher a newspaper he thought might take his mind off his troubles. He had neglected to notice that the front-page headline read: "MAN RESCUES AGED WOMAN FROM FLAMES."

THE Whales reached home, and Bellew was baited even worse by home fans than he had been on the road. Nothing strange about that, if you know the baseball fan. He will turn on a home player sooner than on a visitor. The team opened against the Sox, and Bellew gamely warmed up. Immediately every sickening detail of the famous Little Rescuer story was shouted at him by the thumbs-down mob.

"Going to rescue a baby from an elephant, eh? Whaddye yer goin' to do, bean the brute?"

Loud guffaws.

"That's the only thing he could get a ball near—an elephant."

Delirious shouts.

"Understand Dolan's goin' to sign up an aviator to catch you."

Uncontrollable mirth.

"Are you savin' any money these days?"
Hysterical glee.

"This is worse'n the road," sighed Dolan on the bench.

O'Hare fingered his tobacco-pouch reflectively. "I'm afraid this guy's licked, Jim," he muttered.

"Looks that way." Dolan shook his head. "It's a shame, too; he's a sweet pitcher when he's right."

The Whales were home two weeks, and the razzing of Bellew never ceased. He did not pitch. Dolan would not let him. Came a month on the road, then home once more. When the onslaught of the big pitcher was renewed with seemingly demoniacal fury as he warmed up the first day back, Dolan sauntered out disgusted, looked over the pitchers, signaled Slocum to work, then turned to Bellew.

"Beat it," he said. "Take a day off. Go to the circus, see the elephants or somethin'."

"Yuh go to blazes," was Bellew's angry reply.

"Well, whaddye think of that?" Dolan stood looking after the retreating pitcher until he had passed from view. "What's eatin' that guy, anyway?" He walked to the bench with a frown engraved upon his broad features, sat down, and suddenly smiled. "That's funny," he said to O'Hare.

"What's funny?" growled O'Hare.

"I just told Bellew to take the day off, go to the circus and see the elephants, an' doggone if it entered my mind I was insultin' him."

"You mean that rescuing a girl off the elephant stuff he told the Shrimp?"

The boss nodded.

O'Hare laughed and spat clear of the bats, no trivial effort.

BELLEW dressed and passed out of the grounds via the press gate. At the sidewalk, Eddie Curran stopped him. The veteran writer and humorist had felt appalled at the havoc his training-camp story had wrought on Bellew. He liked the big fellow and was frankly sorry he had been an instrument to jeopardize Bellew's career. No humor, Curran believed, was worth while if it caused injury to feelings or otherwise overstepped the bounds of good fellowship. Curran was much of a

kid at heart. At the very moment he was playing hookey from his job of reporting the day's ball-game to take in the circus. He winced when Bellew passed him with a grunt to his sunny greeting and ignored his desire to talk further. He wished, did Eddie Curran, he could only square himself some way, honestly make the big fellow understand he was genuinely sorry.

Bellew lived less than two miles from the ball-park. He boarded instead of living at a hotel, stopping with a family named Murray, comprising a young widow, her milliner sister and the widow's two curly-haired youngsters, one seven, the other nine. They were boys, and the neighborhood heroes because a professional baseball player lived at their house. Even though heckled and maligned, Bellew was a hero to those kids.

Jimmy and Johnny Murray, his youthful worshipers, he found on the front steps when he reached home, tragedy engraved on their chubby faces. Their customary greeting was boisterous, including, as a rule:

"It's Eddie! Hey, Eddie, didja win? Didja pitch? Who pitched? Any home runs?" But today even such a satellite as a Whales pitcher failed to stir them. They were in the depths of whole-hearted sulks.

"Well, look who's here!" Bellew laughed his greeting. "If it aint the old boys themselves. What's the trouble? Ma make you wash yer ears?"

They shook their heads.

"Come on, now." Bellew bent over them. "What's the wake about? Who's dead? Tell your Uncle Eddie?"

Their mother smiled out an open window. "They wanted to go to the circus, Mr. Bellew, and I couldn't let them because there was nobody to go with them. My hairdresser's coming at three, and I'm having company for tea."

They turned big blue eyes upon Bellew. In them was dumb pleading.

"Wanted to see the old circus, eh? Well, well, well." Bellew couldn't resist teasing them. "Gosh, the old kiddies wanted to see the circus, eh? Well, well, well." He turned and looked down the street. A taxicab was loafing along up. "Huh." Bellew seemed to be talking to himself, while the boys eyed him puzzled. "Wanted to see the old circus, eh?" The cab came abreast of them. He yelled one sharp, peremptory word: "Taxi."

He turned to the kiddies. "Now, hurry! If you aint ready in three minutes, I'll have to—"

But the rest was lost in the ballyhoo of shouting as two kiddies transformed into whooping Indians flew into the house.

THEY sat in a box—in what is known as an arena box, because it borders so close on the sawdusted arena and tanbark rings one can reach out and almost touch the great cavalcade of men and beasts which majestically encircles the amphitheater as a prelude to the great performance—the grand ensemble, it is called.

Bellew lost himself to the kids. In a box not far away he saw Eddie Curran, but ignored him and forgot baseball and the tragedies of life for the time being. He was a kid himself, little Eddie, playmate for the afternoon to Johnny and Jimmy. Such things as the price of whatever a huckster bore in their direction had no meaning. In some miraculous manner Eddie the kid was able to reach a hand in a pocket, extract something magical and in return get popcorn, soda pop, ice-cream, peanuts and candy, which they devoured in the amazing manner peculiar to seven and nine.

On the side of the arena opposite where they sat was banked a brass band in cream-colored uniforms. Before them stood their leader, trim and erect, swinging a baton gracefully as he extracted without seeming effort the brassiest of quick-throbbing melodies. Throughout the colossal hall—big city kiddies seldom see tent-shows—was the hum of noisy conversation and the noise of humming activities as folks poured in and got seated, and hawkers bawled out their wares in a dialect of Americanized English.

The band stopped. The confusion grew. Suddenly was sounded the shrill blast of a whistle. Into the middle ring came a handsome man with flowing black mustache and martial air, astride a pawing white horse. He sat erect, saluted the audience, then blew on his whistle. Immediately all was attention. The entrance-curtains parted; the band leaped into a lilting march; and into the arena moved the colossal circus parade, the opening number of the greatest show on earth. Foremost were horses, of colors cream, milk, sorrel and coal black, on them girl pages with bugles, some with banners, themselves in gold cloth and velvet, their steeds in

spangled trappings. Followed bodies of men similarly decked, also mounted, their horses abreast, pawing and panting, necks arched prettily. They moved to the martial swing of the band's arresting music. A brief pause, and then through the curtained archway came the elephants. Three giants led a herd, the biggest of the three in the middle, one on each flank. All bore that novel East India contraption known as a howdah, a curtained, canopied compartment used in the East by potentates for travel. Trimmings were of gold and velvet. In each sat a girl, regal and beautiful. Followed the huge elephant herd, ranging in size down to the tiniest of pachyderms called baby elephants, but in reality African dwarfs.

BELLEW eyed the bobbing contraptions and their occupants as the boys at his elbows crowded their excitement in exclamations mingled with fear and delight.

"Gee, supposin' they fall in on us!" exclaimed Johnny Murray.

"Gosh, they'll go by right close to us, wont they, Eddie?" cried his brother. "Gee, think I'll beat it. If one of them things sat on you, huh, gee!"

Bellew sat back, feeling about the way he had the first time he pitched to Babe Ruth. He wasn't exactly nervous—just wasn't sure of what might happen.

The occupant of the farthest howdah he could not see. When the cavalcade took the turn at his left, it would be the nearest to him. It seemed to bob more than the others, he thought. He wondered why.

The girls with bugles approached, blowing them lustily. Their shrill yet sweet notes made him think of baying hounds, red-coated hunters, a harassed fox. They came abreast of them, and both Bellew and the boys leaned forward.

Followed the companies of mounted men, a lone rider, a fleeting bit of space and then the ponderous elephants. They appeared huge and ungainly as they came head on, the burdens on their backs seeming strange and unreal above their massive heads. Bellew centered his attention upon the beast which would pass nearest him. At its head rode a mounted East Indian in native garb, in his hands the barbed club with its cruel hook that is jabbed into an elephant's ear to guide it. Johnny and Jimmy Murray drew back in nervous apprehension as the elephants drew close upon them, mountains of swaying flesh.

Bellew, fascinated, sat tense and alert and gazed up.

Suddenly he was on his feet, his arms out, his face ashen.

He bellowed one word; the keeper's horse jumped back affrightened, while the girl in the howdah nearest him arose and with arms outstretched leaned toward him.

"Alice!"

It was but one word, but it was screamed with a hungry, imploring prayer throbbing on every syllable.

The procession halted. Came from the star-eyed beauty above him a laugh, a gesture of fear and impatience; then something snapped, and as the howdah slid down toward Bellew, she jumped and he caught her.

THERE was excitement everywhere, but most where sat Bellew, Johnny and Jimmy Murray and Alice Byrnes.

"What did you yell for?" she asked breathless.

"Why, I don't know," stammered the embarrassed pitcher. "Guess because I was surprised."

"Surprised? Why, I sent you a note at the ball-park today, asking you to come to the matinee, and telling you which side to sit on and which elephant I'd be on."

"You did?" said Bellew. "I didn't get it. It must have come after I left."

"You didn't—" She looked astounded. "You don't mean to say your being here was just an accident? Here in this very box?"

He nodded, puzzled.

She laughed, a small, strange little laugh.

Outside, Eddie Curran was frantically telephoning his editor.

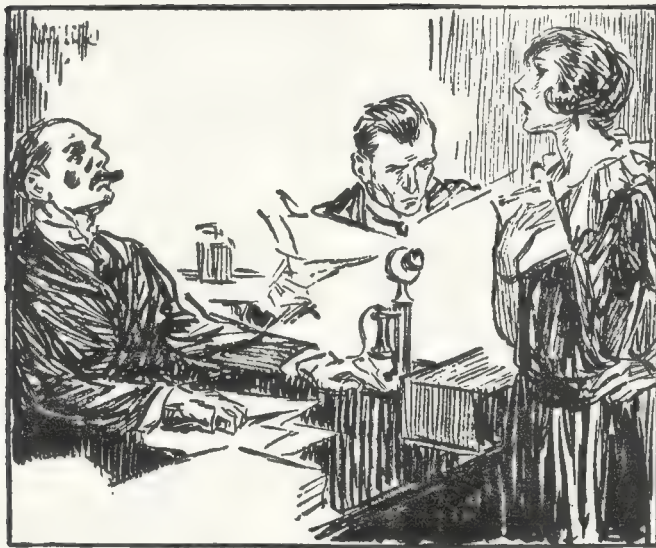
"He did it, I tell you, actually rescued this girl from an elephant like he said the fortune-teller predicted he'd do last spring. Honest to Godfrey! Spread it all over the front page. We'll make this guy the biggest hero in baseball. Said he'd do it, and did it. I'll bet the bugs will yell for nine hours when he shows on the field tomorrow."

"I can't believe it," said Alice Byrnes. "Why," she cried, "I planned this whole rescue, faked it, I did, to save you from that awful ridiculing you've been getting all season. I even told you to sit in a box so's there wouldn't be a hitch."

He sat back, astounded.

"Alice," he cried, "Alice, you, you—"

"Little Rescuer!" she murmured happily.



The Exploits of Mr. White

One of the most strikingly original plots of recent years is employed in the fascinating story which follows—by the author of the famous "Mysteries of the Sea" and "Deep-Water Men."

By **CULPEPER ZANDTT**

WITH a different expression, Henry W. Chandler would have been a rather fine-looking man. With the habitual scowl on his face, it was strong enough to impress itself on the memory as something of a driving force, but the impression was unpleasant—repellant. He was successful through sheer ability and domination—and was hated, not only by everyone in his employ, but by a majority of those with whom he came in contact. To give the man such extenuating credit as there may be in his case, part of this was due to dyspepsia—though dyspepsia, being curable, is a poor excuse. He invariably ate his meals in a hurry, even when there was no hurry. In order to be conscious that he was eating, when his mind was racing over a thousand other things, he chose food with a tang and a kick in it. He smoked too much. There was a perceptible increase in his nervous irritability as the years passed. And the joke of the situation—or tragedy, as one looks at it—was that he very strongly desired the good

opinion of his fellow-men—and women. Consider him, during a typical morning:

Chandler reached his office on the stroke of nine, as usual. A letter dictated on the previous afternoon should have been on his desk for signature with the morning mail, but hadn't been finished because the stenographer, being in doubt over two or three words, had waited to look them up in her larger dictionary at home. She had reached the office before him and brought in the letter before nine-fifteen—but the sarcastic way in which he looked from her to the clock, without a word, upset her completely. It was simply human nature to justify herself:

"The small dictionary, here, didn't give all the meanings of four words you used in this letter, Mr. Chandler—and I wanted to look them up at home to be sure! I've written the letter exactly as you dictated it, but I hope you'll let me substitute other words in three cases, because these really don't mean what you were trying to convey!"

"Miss Grant—I'm paying you thirty dollars a week as a competent stenographer! You're supposed to know enough of the English language, without extra study in a library, to catch any misuse of a word while I'm dictating, and mention it at the time."

"I did that once, and you nearly blew my head off!"

"Wait! I'm doing the talking! When I tell you that I want a letter on my desk when I get here in the morning, I mean just that! Fifteen minutes later won't do at all! If you'd spend less time powdering your nose, perhaps you might get your work done on time! That's all!"

For a moment the girl's eyes were full of tears, but when she went back to her desk in the outer office, her face was flaming—she was too mad to cry. Her bag came out of a drawer, and within three seconds she was dabbing nose and cheeks with a powder-pad as she squinted into the little mirror inside. It was entirely automatic habit—she didn't even know she was doing it until one of the other girls leaned over and whispered: "Nix on the rouge, Sally—you had a lot on before! Mebbe that's what he was sore about this time!"

MEANWHILE, Bowers, who covered some of the middle States, came in, after just completing a trip, and was asked to report at once in the boss' office. He would have preferred getting his memorandum and a full report in shape, but if Chandler wanted it half-baked, that settled it. He went in—to be raked over concerning a contract he'd failed to land.

"I think I can get that account in about four or five months, Mr. Chandler," he responded. "Denton's brother-in-law is one of the Excelsior Mills company. I guess there's a lot of family argument at home about throwing some business that way if the price is right. And the Excelsior people made him an offer of ten carloads that we simply couldn't touch—"

"How do you know we couldn't! Why didn't you wire in—put it up to me! I'm running this business, Bowers!"

"Well, if you told me to offer a lower price than theirs, Mr. Chandler, I wouldn't do it—because our goods cost more than that to make! There's nothing in cut-throating to get trade—you know that as well as I do! The Excelsior people are going to skimp on those goods; they've got to! Denton's going to be sick of the

contract in a month—he'll cancel what's left of it in two or three. He knows exactly what our goods are—and when he gets through with that brother-in-law of his, I'll land him for a good big order. Outside of that one miss, I think I've done pretty well, this trip. How about it?"

"Oh-h-h—nothing to suggest medals, Bowers—nothing to write home about! Good average trip, perhaps—but we can't run this business on averages—got to do a shade better than that! I think I could have sold Denton something of a bill in spite of the brother-in-law—a salesman has to have the bulldog hang-on and never take no for an answer. No—I think with more application you might have done a good deal better. In fact, I'm giving you easier territory to cover next time, and letting Greer see what he can do with yours! I don't know how many cigars and theater tickets you charge up on your expense-account, but it seems to me ample, Bowers—ample!"

"That'll be about all the discussion we need in this case, Mr. Chandler. You've ridden me once or twice before when there was no excuse for it. I can sell goods anywhere in the United States—with the next man—and there are plenty of men who want the sort of ability I've got. So I'll just write out a full report of my trip, turn in my orders, and get whatever's coming to me from the cashier. You can't talk to me like this, because I won't take it."

"Suit yourself, Bowers—suit yourself! I've never yet had an employee who was indispensable in my business. I'm perfectly frank with all of them—believe in telling 'em exactly where they stand, for their own good. I think there's nothing more to say. Close the door when you go out."

CHANDLER'S private secretary was a little more privileged than the other girls, partly because he was unconsciously attracted by her to the point of overlooking what he considered minor faults, partly because she was the unusual type of woman who possesses keen business intelligence. Added to this, she had enough intuition to sense a little of the real man underneath his repellant shell. If it suited Maude Walters for any good reason to be late in reaching the office, she was late—but she also worked for hours in the evening if there was need of it. On this particular day she came down with her hair bobbed. She was the type which acquires added

witchery from that style of coiffure, and Chandler secretly owed to its effectiveness when she removed her hat; but he had gone on record as being vehemently opposed to the practice, and so his comment was like a whiplash to the girl:

"Hmph! Had to join the fool-brigade at last, did you? Couldn't go on looking like a decent, self-respecting woman! Oh—all right! I suppose what you've got inside your head is still working!"

She knew she was more attractive with her bobbed hair—had hoped her employer would notice the difference and like it even if he was slow to say so. Being more hurt than angry, she quietly went out to the wash-room so that he wouldn't see the tears rolling down her face. Her mother was an invalid; she was helping a sister through art-school and a brother in the Massachusetts "Tech." Otherwise, she would have walked out of the building for the last time, without another word to her employer. He noticed that she was unusually reserved for the next week or two—clumsily handed her a box of cheap candy, one morning, as a peace-offering. But they were like two people trying to understand each other with a high wall between them, over or through which neither could see.

THESE are detached examples of what Chandler was like in his own office. Similar irritability and lack of tact were slowly but surely setting him apart in his clubs, and in the houses to which he was invited with less frequency each year. He might have gone on to a life of almost complete isolation had it not been for an incident on the Sleepy Hollow turnpike one afternoon when he was out in his car—alone. An acquaintance—Samuel F. Wentworth, the Wall Street magnate—had broken down at the side of the road, where mechanics from the nearest repair-shop had told him it would be an all-night job to put his car in shape. So Chandler, rather ungraciously, invited the stranded motorist to ride back with him. On the way down to the city he maliciously hogged the road once or twice to prevent other cars from passing him, and then raced them as far as he dared with his higher-powered machine. While in the act of doing this, he seemed to enjoy it—but when the other motorists disappeared, leaving an echo of curses trailing along the road, the manufacturer's face clouded over with depres-

sion. The zest was gone. He was totally unconscious that Wentworth had been closely observing his actions—and the reaction from them. Back in the city, the financier surprised him with an invitation to dine at one of the more famous clubs. After dinner, he started an unusual discussion while they were smoking.

"Chandler—it didn't seem to me that you were getting much fun out of those brushes on the road, coming down. Eh?"

"No! I wasn't! Confound it all, Wentworth, I was only in fun! Just meant to tease 'em a little and then race 'em—if there were no traffic-bulls in sight. Why couldn't they take it in the same spirit? Why should they curse me as they did when I slowed down and let 'em by?"

"Well, if I'd been in one of those other cars, I think I'd have misunderstood you myself. There's a lot in the way a thing is done, you know. Out West, you may call a man a liar, a darned old skunk, or any other pet name—provided you smile. If it's done with a scowl such as you habitually wear, one gets a chunk of lead in him, *pronto*. You seem to have forgotten me altogether during the thirty-odd years since we first knew each other. I was Sammy Wentworth, from the next village, one of the old swimming-hole gang. We used to go trout-fishing together, you and I, but of course we've changed a lot since then. In those days I thought you a mighty likable boy. Kinda shy and reserved, but good-hearted and a pretty good sport. Well—I believe you are still, Hen—inside. But whether it's just your misfortune or a result of hard business dealing while you've been making your pile, you certainly have managed to stir up a lot of antagonism lately. You pay nearly top-notch wages in this town—for service—and I guess you get it. But the money is about all that makes your employees stick. In this club and at least two others I could mention, you might ask ten men to dine with you—and be met by excuses. How about it? Am I right?"

"Absolutely—Sam! Funny, I didn't recognize you as one of the old gang! And it's worrying me so that I'm thinking of giving up my business—living abroad—"

"Then you'll add gobs of homesickness to more or less ostracism wherever you go. If you ask me, I'd say stick it out right here. Find out what it is that's wrong—go to work systematically to overcome it. Make people like you, Hen!"

"Lord—if I only could! Didn't one of the old writers say something, somewhere, about 'seeing yourself the way other folks size you up?' Never knew just how it was put—but that was the gist of it."

Oh, wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us.

"That's it! Who wrote it? I must get that! What's it in?"

"Bobbie Burns. It's part of his 'Lines to a Louse.' And by Jove—I believe that's about the only way you'd really take a tumble to yourself, Hen! I might talk all night and not make the idea penetrate as it would if you were—say in the fourth dimension—looking down at yourself, just as you are—day by day."

"Hmph! If I could do that, I might figure the difficulty out and overcome it. But of course such a thing is merely a crazy idea—utterly impossible! No man could ever see himself as he appears to those around him!"

"H-m-m—six months ago, I'd have agreed with you as to that. Now—I'm not so sure."

"What do you mean? How could such a thing be possible?"

"Well, there's a man I know who has some of the most peculiar gifts and ideas I ever ran across. He did me a service that was worth a heap of money. Then, at my suggestion, he tackled the case of a friend who happened to be in a most serious condition—did so much for him that he was glad to pay a big sum of money for it. Say, Hen—let me put it up to you straight and see how much in earnest you may get? Suppose it was possible for this friend of mine to do exactly what we've been talking about? I don't guarantee he can, or would even attempt it—but if he did, he'd probably succeed. Suppose that, in making you see yourself exactly as you appear to other people, he automatically suggested the remedy? Suppose, when he finally got through, that your whole personality had changed to such an extent that your employees were dead stuck on you, your business relations pleasant everywhere, your social invitations increasing every month? What do you think it would be worth? If the experiment actually panned out as I've suggested, how much would you be willing to pay for it?"

"Hmph! I wouldn't know just how to limit the amount! Haven't the faintest idea how one could put a price upon a

service of that sort. I'll be frank with you, Sam—now that you've recalled the old days. I'm forty-five—unmarried, no near relatives—worth possibly two or three millions; and I know that because of some defect in my make-up I'm hated by people I really want to like me. I can see the ostracism getting a little more pronounced every year, though it doesn't seem to affect the money-making ability as yet. In fact, I think the directors of two banks reelected me as chairman because I'm considered utterly cold-blooded and lacking in sentiment. Now—I can see the thing working out just as you say, before very long. I'll get so disheartened that I'll simply end it all! Well—how is a man to set a price on remedying all that? Of course I think you're plumb crazy in suggesting that there may be a remedy, but I'm desperate enough to try most anything—and pay for it. Whatever it costs!"

"Just sit here a few minutes while I go out and telephone my friend! If he's disengaged this evening, I don't think you have any engagement important enough to prevent our going there. Eh?"

IN about forty minutes, Wentworth and Chandler got out of a taxi before one of the finest apartment-buildings on Riverside Drive and went up to a suite on the seventh floor with an extensive view up and down the river—the luxurious home of a Mr. Pennington White.

Chandler's first impression of the man who got out of a big leather chair to greet them was both disappointing and intriguing. His clothes were in such perfect taste that one didn't notice them. In face and manner he was so like thousands of other men similar in type that there seemed to be nothing about him which held one's attention—and yet there was a vague familiarity, as if one had been introduced to him before. For a while, his eyelids were half lowered, giving him a rather sleepy look. His manner, while thoroughly courteous, conveyed some impression that he would have been equally well satisfied if left to his books and his pipe, that evening, without callers. It seemed to the manufacturer that Wentworth took a very unconventional way of presenting him—merely asking their host:

"Pen, before introducing my friend, have you any idea as to his identity?"

White's eyes opened more fully in a searching glance which traveled over

Chandler from head to foot and missed nothing—then narrowed again, speculatively.

"I think so—but just let me dip into my files a bit. I'll make sure—possibly dig up something which may be of use."

The manufacturer had noticed as they came into the comfortable living-room that its walls on three sides were lined with bookshelves to the height of one's head, and he now saw that one entire side was filled with metal filing-cases such as are used for letters and documents. Running his finger along a row until it rested on the letter he wanted, White took out a file and drew from it half a dozen Sunday supplement illustrations—glancing from them to his caller. Apparently his first guess was at fault, for he replaced the file, thought a moment, then pulled out another that yielded but two illustrations, with a few odd news-clippings of biographical data which he read entirely through before replacing the file. Then he resumed his leather chair by the broad table, filled and lighted his pipe before speaking.

"It would seem from my available data, Mr. Chandler," he observed, "that you are not very popular, socially. I have two rotogravure pictures of you—one, as chairman of the board of the Ampremattock National Bank—and the other as chairman of a certain manufacturers' association. If you were known well in society, there would be a dozen or more pictures to choose from—snapshots at Palm Beach, Virginia Hot Springs, Asheville, Newport, Bretton Woods—yachting, golfing, riding, steamer-pictures. Were you popular among your business associates, there would be much more data on your activities—group-pictures with various committees and business leaders. You are reputed to be worth two or three millions—to be a force in the business world, unmarried, with little taste for the usual rich-men's recreations—a man with a country constitution, coming originally from Blenkinville, Ohio, where your first job was that of freight-handler in the local railway station. Now, on the face of it, your lack of popularity under these conditions is unusual—sufficiently so to be remarkable, and arouse my interest. One of those clippings in my file—which of course I won't show you—would constitute sufficient grounds for a libel-suit if you were foolish enough to bring one. It states pretty flatly that you are probably one of the most generally disliked men in New York.

The city editor was taking a big chance when he let that paragraph stand as it was written—evidently gambling on the belief that you wouldn't give him an opening to prove the statements in court. Well, my business depends a good deal upon study of physiognomy, and human nature as I find it. You give me the impression of qualities decidedly the reverse of inborn meanness—of being a fairly good sport. So—I don't just get it! Why are you so unpopular—if I'm right in my deductions?"

Chandler smiled—rather grimly. "If I knew exactly, Mr. White, it would be a simpler matter to remedy the fact. Apparently you've had nothing upon which to base your opinion except a prejudiced news-paragraph which might have been written by a personal enemy, and the mere absence of other data which you think your files should contain. But you've scored with your diagnosis. I know this: that my manner and what I say to various people seem to be repellant when nothing is further from my intention than to insult anybody, to really hurt his or her feelings—can't understand why they don't take what I say as I mean it, for their own good—"

"Ah! Now you've *said* something! Nobody likes to be told anything for his own good unless the intention is thoroughly disguised under a tactful manner! I think I'm beginning to visualize how you generally talk and act with people. Suppose you could watch yourself from the outside for a month, as a mere spectator—and at the same time have, as the sole occupation before you, the task of ingratiating yourself with everyone you meet? Wouldn't that show the reason for what I infer and you admit—indicate a positive way to reverse the condition?"

"Wentworth and I were discussing exactly that supposition—which of course is clearly impossible!"

"Oh, hold on, now—go slow! *Impossible* is a bluffing word—more front than solidity. I sometimes think it's altogether bluff. Er—will you gentlemen amuse yourselves here for twenty minutes or so while I dig up something in another room? Kato will bring you a snack of refreshments and tobacco. I want to figure out a little experiment."

TAKING the two rotogravure portraits with him, White went into his bedroom, which was unusually spacious and had a mahogany wardrobe built along one whole

side. From over a hundred different suits in this, he selected one which almost exactly duplicated that worn by the manufacturer at the moment. Before putting it on, he sat down before a dresser with a trefoil mirror—the two pictures stuck up before him. As he had shaved just before dinner, his face was smooth enough to allow him to etch tiny marks upon it with a grease-pencil and then work them into the skin so that they were not perceptible at three or four feet distance—his first and most artistic work being upon the frown-wrinkles of the forehead, particularly those between the eyes. By means of a drug injected under the skin, he produced little swellings in certain muscles, scarcely perceptible, yet making a subtle alteration in his facial expression. Inside of half an hour he had produced so exact a counterpart of the man in the other room that the effect was startling. He went out to the others, placed a table-mirror on the broad table in front of Chandler, and took a chair beyond it, so that the manufacturer could look directly from his own reflections to his double. With a vocal inflection which made both of them almost jump, he said:

"I've had no time to familiarize myself with your voice, your habitual gestures and mannerisms, Mr. Chandler—but to illustrate my point, I'll guess at them for a few moments. Let us suppose that you have just seated yourself at a restaurant or club-table. You toss the menu aside, as I do this pamphlet—too nervous and irritable to glance through it. You won't stand for any suggestions from the waiter.

"Don't tell me what to eat! If I didn't know that much, I wouldn't come here! Bring me a lobster Newberg, with plenty of butter! Lyonnaise potatoes—sausages and buckwheat-cakes. Then some ice-cream. I want a cocktail while I'm waiting—and a big cup of coffee. Needn't stop to play marbles while you're getting the order, you know!"

OF course some of the tones in White's voice were not quite perfect, though none but Chandler himself would have noticed any marked difference—and even he recognized his habitual manner beyond any question. It was so natural, in fact, that he couldn't see why it should be considered offensive. It was his way of talking to a waiter—the food was so exactly what he sometimes ordered that it made his mouth water, though he had dined less than

two hours before. He kept looking from his reflection in the mirror to the man at the end of the table in utter amazement—it was as if that man were merely another reflection in a second mirror. As for Wentworth, he had seen White do startling things before—but this was beyond any of them. The man resumed his own voice and manner to do a little explaining:

"Had you been of a more pronounced type, Mr. Chandler, it would have been much more difficult to impersonate you. But like myself, you are the average type—similar complexion, size, weight, general appearance. There should be no difficulty in doing what I suggested."

"I'm afraid it wouldn't work, Mr. White! In this little talk to the waiter, just now, I think almost anybody would say that you hit off my voice and manner perfectly. The fact that I see nothing objectionable in it is proof to me, also. If you expect to give me a course of lessons like this, arguing in each case to show me what you consider wrong in my manner, it would be an endless undertaking, and I probably wouldn't agree with you at the end."

"No—I don't think you would. Nothing was further from my intention than any such course of lessons, because they would lack the one thing necessary to drive the point home—contrast. If that waiter had been standing by this table and you had been watching his face, you would have comprehended in less than a moment what was offensive. If I were sitting at the desk in your office giving your employees hell, as I think you probably do now and then, you would get the detached point of view and see exactly how you appear to them. What I suggest is that you take me down to your office as a Western cousin who is visiting you, with the idea of possibly investing in your business. Let me sit there a few hours each day, reading my paper or listening to you as you transact it,—going out to lunch with you, dining at your club, afterward,—until I'm familiar with every little habit and mannerism you have. Then after I've done that for a week or two—we change places. I make you up exactly as the supposed cousin looked—by no means impossible or even difficult; I make myself up as you. To all intents, I am you for the next few weeks. During that time you are to cultivate, as my cousin, the liking and good will of everybody you meet—both men and women. That will be your sole business, aside from

watching me and avoiding the things I do in your place. After business hours each day you stop at a certain gymnasium, take a systematic course of setting-up exercises until you're in much better physical shape—and eat what the professor says you *must* eat! A good deal of your offensive manner, Mr. Chandler, is caused by chronic dyspepsia. That will have to come out of you before we get anywhere."

"But—but—hang it all, man! Why, this scheme of yours simply couldn't be carried out unless you hypnotized everybody in my office! The idea is preposterous! Do you think for one moment that you could get away with anything like that? Not in a hundred years! Don't you suppose that my office force, seeing me every day, know me beyond all possibility of substitution?"

"I'll lay a little side bet of a thousand dollars that they *don't* know you anywhere near as well as that—and prove it by taking your place down there for half a day—any time! Look here, Mr. Chandler—this isn't theory or mental derangement with me! I know exactly what I'm talking about—have tested it in hundreds of ways. If you were of unusual type, that would be another matter altogether—but you're not. Let me see if I understand your frame of mind correctly? If you actually were the sort of man you appear to be among those who come in daily contact with you, the case would be almost hopeless. There might be a slant reaching way back through your inheritance which would be very difficult to combat—like trying to change the leopard's spots. But you wouldn't have come up here with our mutual friend unless you were fundamentally a whole lot better than that, inside—and worried about an unknown fault which you seem helpless to correct. You find yourself drifting toward heart-breaking isolation, have reached the point where you'll do almost anything to switch away from that and come back to normal popularity among your acquaintances. Isn't this pretty close to the real situation?"

"Your intuition is kinda uncanny, White—but I guess I might as well admit that you've described my case exactly! You seem to think you can solve my problem and pull me out of this. Wentworth appears to be even more positive than you are. I've always prided myself upon having an open mind—being the sort of guy who'll try anything once. I still think your

proposition absolutely crazy—impractical, impossible; but I'll try it! I won't even ask how much it's going to cost!"

"It will be expensive—because I run not only a constant risk of personal injury, but am liable to arrest for conspiracy as an impostor—oh, on several different counts. It's a ticklish business—in fact, I don't know of anyone else attempting it. And there's one thing I'll have to have distinctly understood—with Wentworth, here, as witness to it: no matter how outrageous you may think anything I do or say, you're not to interfere by act or word at the time. Take it up with me when we're alone, if you like—but it must be hands off before anyone else!"

"The idea being—"

"That any mix-up or argument between us would nullify everything I'd done and force explanations which nobody would believe when he heard them. We might both land in jail on the charge of making away with the missing Mr. Chandler and conspiring to steal his business. I fancy Wentworth might guarantee that I won't appropriate any of your funds or queer your business—if you play the game, and let me alone."

"**B**UT how the devil can you *handle* the business in my place—knowing absolutely nothing about it?"

"I'm assuming that you have, or can arrange to have, some sort of a directors'-room or conference-room immediately back of your office—a room to which, ordinarily, nobody would have access but you or your secretary, and from which even she can be kept out if necessary—"

"Yes. I have such a room—naturally. Two doors. One from my office—the other a private exit to a little side hall, always locked on the inside. No possibility of anyone seeing into that room unless he bores a hole through the oak partition."

"Then that simplifies the whole proposition. While I'm studying you, as the Western cousin, I have a desk in that room and stay there most of the time—with a camouflaged dictaphone on your own desk and mine for a word or two of guidance at any time. Several times a day I come out and read my newspaper in your office, to watch you more closely, but go back to my own when you have any confidential interview on hand. When we change places, you become I in that other office. When there are checks or letters to be signed,

I'll manage to put them off a few minutes until I can take them in to you for execution. During business interviews, if we are sitting in the same room, I'll arrange a code of signals by which you convey to me: 'Yes'—'No'—'Agree'—'Object'—'Put off for the present'—'Delay for an hour or two.' If you are in the private office, you can use a buzzer or a snapper-sounder to convey the same information through the dictaphone. In this way, there should be no difficulty in handling any business which may come up."

"Gosh, White! I didn't believe you could make a practical suggestion on what seemed to me a prohibitive complication—but I guess, after all, it might work. Still—it seems to me there must be times when you can't stall—when it'll arouse suspicion if you don't sign something!"

"Then I'd better practice up on your signature—but you can bet your sweet life I won't use it unless I have to, because that's forgery—a State's prison offense. As a matter of fact, it would be difficult to convince the police department in any mix-up that I'm not guilty 'of several State's prison offenses. The only safe course is to bull it through, against any evidence, that I actually am Henry W. Chandler—and can prove it in a number of ways. If they can't shake that fact, they can't touch me as long as I commit no criminal act in your personality. Well—how about it? If I'm a crook, you run a frightful risk of being done out of your identity and your fortune, after I'm once established. If I'm honest, we'll undoubtedly put you where you want to be among your fellow-men. Feel like gambling—or don't you?"

"I'll play! I've got to, whether I think it's safe or not, White—because I'll go crazy with melancholia if I don't!"

NEXT week the psycho-analyst—as he was considered by physicians in the neighborhood where he lived—appeared in Chandler's office and was sarcastically greeted as a cousin from Denver. He wore a mustache which had cost a hundred dollars to make, and was worth it. Also, he seemed to be raising a beard. His personality was genial—pleasant. Upon everyone in the office to whom he was introduced, he made a very winning impression. When it was understood that he would be in New York for some time and would have a desk in the conference-room back of the private office, there was a feeling of

satisfaction among the employees, who hoped that his influence as a relative might have some effect in toning down his unpleasant cousin. But another streak which showed how thoroughly Chandler misunderstood his own manner and reactions led him to be even more exasperating than usual during the following week. If he had started out to show the specialist his extreme limit in that direction, he couldn't have succeeded better—and yet White was positive that the man was unconscious of the causes leading up to the effect he produced.

AT the end of ten days an intervening holiday closed the office from Thursday to Monday. This seemed a favorable time for the change of identities, so that when Monday came, it was White who appeared in the office as the unpopular boss—and Chandler who came back as the more genial Westerner, Silas Burnett. The greatest risk in this change had seemed to be a strong probability that Chandler would forget himself from time to time—revert to his sarcastic manner; but, after considering this in various ways, White decided the safest course was to give him something else to think about, and started in to reproduce the other man's personality with no attempt at modification.

It took an hour or so of very carefully watching his tongue and actions for Chandler to break himself into his new identity. Then—to his surprise—he discovered that he had been covertly watching the specialist during the past ten days, noting the employees with whom he seemed to be upon such pleasant, easy terms. One, for example, was Maude Walters, his private secretary—who had a desk in his office which she used except when he was having a confidential talk with some one. He had always liked Maude, but had never been able to get upon really friendly terms because of his manner. Now, with this strange new sense of detachment which came so much easier than he thought it would, he found himself chatting pleasantly with her, getting more of an insight into her home life than he'd ever had. She amazed him by accepting a dinner and theater invitation one evening, and while loyally close-mouthed as to complaints against her employer, said quite frankly that the man seemed unable to distinguish between that which stung like a whiplash and a pleasanter manner of putting things.

This she emphasized next day with a glance in Burnett's direction when her supposed employer unburdened himself of a few cutting remarks in regard to something she had apparently overlooked. Just for the sake of driving home the point of what he *could* do when he was in top form, she started to defend herself with rather more spirit than usual—and White played up to the opportunity in a thoroughly artistic manner. Without quite saying the utterly unforgivable thing, he displayed an originality in sarcastic innuendo which made the real Chandler squirm in his chair with clenched fists and the impulse to slap the fellow's face. (Confound him—couldn't he see how unjust and unreasonable he was with the girl! There were tears in her eyes when she went out of the room!)

White sensed exactly what was in his mind—inwardly grinning, and reflecting that the job might be easier than he'd anticipated. He heard the scrape of the chair as Chandler sprang to his feet and impulsively came across the room—so was ready for him when the girl had gone out: "Steady, old chap! Steady! You forgot yourself, then! It won't do! You'll get us both in hot water if you don't learn to control yourself!"

"But damn it all, White—"

"S-s-s-h! Lower, man—*whisper!*"

"I never talked to a girl like that, you know—least of all, a nice girl like Maude!"

"You used almost those identical words to her a couple of weeks ago—and your manner was even more offensive! Just ask her, if you don't believe me! Fortunately we've got the eternal triangle to start your first realization—when two men are interested in the same girl, it sharpens both their perception and their imagination a heap. Now, let's see if we can't carry the same awakening along with us when I begin to ride one of your office men—or salesmen. Get back there into your hole until I bring some checks to sign. Might tell Maude that you remonstrated with me—see what she says."

THERE might have been more risk of Chandler's relapsing into bits of his sarcastic manner while impersonating Silas Burnett had it not been for his being made a general confidant of the office force—a condition which the specialist had himself started before the change of identities for exactly this purpose. So it had come about that whenever White, as the supposed

Chandler, was particularly unpleasant to some clerk or girl, the victim made a point of rehearsing all the details to the supposed Burnett and asking what he thought of a man who would talk and act that way—the impression being that Burnett had considerable influence with his cousin and would remonstrate with him. Several times when Chandler didn't at first see anything much out of the way in White's manner with a certain individual—thought him about right in each particular case—he came to revise his opinion after hearing how it struck the general viewpoint of the office. Maude Walters opened his eyes a good deal by asking every little while if he had happened to catch any of the interviews with business acquaintances.

"He thinks he's joshing them and is rather funny, Mr. Burnett—but he doesn't laugh much when he's talking, and he hasn't any more sense of humor than a hen! I heard him telling one of the bank men that 'he supposed he had to stand for graft from his womenfolks like all the rest, and look pleasant when the bills came in.' Now, that was Chandler's idea of joking—being funny. He knew that man had an expensive wife who kept his nose on the grindstone. It would have been risky if he'd said that to a pretty good friend. To just a business acquaintance—a bank man, mind you—it was the sort of impertinence no man will take from anybody! Gresham had plenty of tact—didn't appear to hear the remark at all. But he's got it in for Chandler all the same, and the boss may find it out sometime when he wants a little note-accommodation."

"You seem to think he isn't quite as bad inside as he sounds, Miss Walters."

"I *know* he isn't! Don't ask me how I reason it out, because I can't tell you. Just the intuition every woman has, I guess. Sometimes it makes me want to scream, when I hear him queering himself as he does!"

ALL this sort of thing, of course, assisted Chandler materially in getting the outside point of view on himself—day by day, he understood more clearly just what it had been in his manner and talk which antagonized everyone with whom he came in contact. And with the horrible example White put up before his eyes, he came unconsciously to adopt a manner as different from it as he could think up. This was quite in keeping with his per-

sonality as the supposed Burnett. He found, to his amazement, that he was steadily ingratiating himself, not only with everybody in the office, but with people who came in to do business with Chandler—officials of two or three banks, for instance, to whom White introduced him as his cousin when they had gone together to get a note discounted or discuss some extension of the business. With these people he dropped a few hints which he hoped might bear fruit, later.

All things considered, White had been handling the business very well—with its owner's advice constantly available when needed. But he knew, better than anyone else possibly could know, that he was bound to strike complications sooner or later. Probably the one case which opened Chandler's eyes to himself more than any of the others was that of his former salesman Bowers, whose real ability he missed a good deal more than he would have admitted to anybody. Bowers happened in one day and Miss Walters introduced him to the supposed Burnett while he was waiting to see the boss. After an exceedingly pleasant chat upon business conditions, in which Bowers showed how thoroughly he understood them, the pseudo Chandler returned from lunch—and the real Chandler, in the private office, listened closely to the interview with the aid of the dictaphone. Bowers had gone with a rival concern, but said he was handicapped through not being always sure of their goods, and would consider a proposition if his old employer cared to make one. White instantly reacted as he knew Chandler would in the circumstances.

"I could use you, Bowers, of course—just as I could use any man who has had experience in selling on the road. But I'd expect you to begin at a little less than I paid before, until I see whether you make good. H-m-m—you've been with those people long enough to get a good deal of dope on the way they do business. Suppose you stay there another month and learn all you can for me about their secret processes? If you brought me anything really valuable, I might take you back at your old salary—"

"Mr. Chandler, that sort of thing is done, I know. Technically, I suppose it wouldn't be considered much worse than sharp business practice. But I'm not built that way—I'd see you in hell before I'd do it! I guess there isn't much use in our try-

ing to get together; we just don't think the same way, at all!"

The real Chandler was fairly dancing up and down in the other office. Hurrying out into the little rear hall, he caught Bowers before the elevator stopped to take him down—and said hastily:

"Er—Bowers—I happened to overhear the wind-up of that talk you had with my—er—cousin. From what he said the other day, I think he'd like to have you back—without any strings to it either. He's in poor health, but the treatment he's taking seems to be doing him good. Suppose you drop in again about five or six weeks from now and see if he isn't a little more human? Hey?"

Dodging back into the office, he locked the door again and went through to where White was sitting at his desk—alone for the moment.

"Say, look here, White! I think you went entirely too far with Bowers! I'd give a good deal to get him back—he's a crackerjack salesman—"

"Then you never should have talked to him as you did when he left."

"Whaddya mean—talked to him! I never said anything as insulting and nasty as you did, just now!"

"Say—man! Just ask Maude Walters exactly what you did say! She sat here and heard the whole talk—every word. She'll give it to you in detail. Just ask her!"

"Very well! I'll do that. But—er—I prefer that you don't call her by her first name any more. It's—too familiar!"

"Eternal triangle again, eh? Bully! Now look here, Burnett! I'm running this business—not you! See? I hire my employees—and I fire 'em! If Maude gets up-stage and puts on airs, I'll fire her so quick she won't know what's happened for an hour or two! Do you get that? If you want her to stay here, keep your mouth shut! If she objects to what I call her, tell her she can take it up with me, herself—"

"Oh—er—she's never said a word about it! I just thought—"

And with that, the conversation lapsed.

IN whatever White did, he believed in thoroughness—in getting each of his faculties ninety per cent efficient if he could. His hands, at times, were interesting to watch, so perfectly did he make them co-ordinate with his brain in whatever he

wished to make them do. He'd become not only a fine draftsman but an excellent all-round mechanic. The question of ever having to sign Chandler's name upon letters or checks was one he hadn't fully considered until the man brought it up as one of the imminent, likely things which might have to be done. He couldn't begin any too soon in making his imitation of Chandler's signature a perfect one, and so he commenced at once when he reached his own apartment every night to practice copying the signature from letters and checks which he had no difficulty in obtaining. Each night's practice-work he methodically burned when he had finished, so that there were never any telltale scraps of paper or "reverse blotters" left around. In a very short time he saw that his imitation was to all intents perfect, but kept on practicing so that he shouldn't forget it. While doing this, he mentioned occasionally to bookkeepers and other clerks in the office that he was beginning to be troubled with rheumatism in his hands—took medicine, in their presence, from a bottle which he had emptied and then refilled with black tea. Twice he called in the head bookkeeper to ask if his signature on a check appeared to be as usual—saying that it was sometimes painful for him to hold the pen while signing and was in doubt whether he had botched the signature. These little casual occurrences passed into office history as mere incidents in the day's activities—yet were noted and remembered, none the less. Then, out of a clear sky, the emergency came. In leaving the building with him, one night, the real Chandler got his fingers caught in the revolving-door somehow, and broke two of them. Nothing was said until after a doctor had set them and they were home in Chandler's uptown apartment. Then—the manufacturer tried to realize just how serious the predicament was.

"Of course this stops my signing anything for two or three weeks, anyhow! How long do you suppose it would take you to imitate my signature well enough to pass examination with a magnifying-glass?"

"Fortunately, I can do that now! Some complication like this was bound to happen sooner or later, as you yourself said in the beginning—so we couldn't risk being caught napping. I'll take most of the papers into your office to sign, as we've been doing—and sign others in Blake's presence

so that he can swear to it if questioned. For two or three days, you'd better not show up at the office at all—your bandaged fingers might be too much of a coincidence. And if the police get after me in any way, you'd best keep as far out of it as you can—because the first thing they'd do with you is telephone Denver for information at any address you gave. You wouldn't be known there, of course—which is mighty suspicious on the face of it. I thought of going West, myself—renting and living in a house for a few weeks before we started—but the necessity seemed too remote. Damned sorry, now, that I didn't!"

IN the morning White called at three of the banks in which Chandler maintained active accounts and had brief talks with the cashiers—explaining the trouble he'd been having with rheumatism, showing the cramped position into which it sometimes drew his fingers, and leaving with each of them a sample signature while his fingers were stiff and painful to move. At first they were merely sorry to learn of his trouble—passed along the signature to their paying-tellers, and thought no more about it. Chandler's checks for the next week were the routine sort, made out to familiar names. Then—it occurred to the real Chandler that if some kind of a mix-up did occur, and he thought it advisable to leave the city for a while, he hadn't quite a hundred dollars in his clothes. With his fingers out of commission, appearing as another man whose resources nobody but his supposed cousin knew anything about, he suddenly realized that he had no way of getting any money unless he borrowed it from Sam Wentworth—and Sam had left the city upon one of his yacht-cruises which might be prolonged indefinitely.

Up to this time he had simply drawn a check for a few hundred when he was out of funds, and when the bookkeeper had cashed it, handed the money to White, who passed it on to his supposed cousin at first opportunity. So it now seemed to him that he ought to have a reserve-fund of several thousands in cash for emergencies. Suppose something happened to White! The specialist saw the point instantly, and drew a check for ten thousand which the bookkeeper cashed and handed over to him. Chandler receipted for it as Burnett, an hour later. The whole transaction was per-

fectly straight. The supposed Chandler undoubtedly had a right to draw his own money as long as he had a balance in the bank—and do what he pleased with it, afterward. But it just happened that Chandler had never drawn so large an amount in cash before from that particular bank except for his regular pay-rolls—and on the face of it, this ten thousand had nothing to do with the pay-rolls.

The paying teller cashed the check without a moment's hesitation for John Blake, the bookkeeper, whom he had known for years—there seemed to be nothing out of the way about the signature. But the amount stuck in his mind. Later he mentioned it to the cashier—showing the voucher. He saw nothing wrong with the signature either—but it suddenly occurred to him that something about that recent interview with Chandler had been vaguely sticking in his mind. As he thought it over, it seemed that there had been something peculiar about Chandler himself. In a moment, he had it. The manufacturer had never before talked with him when there hadn't been a sort of nasty innuendo in his manner—uncalled-for sarcasm. Yet this time the man had been to all intents a gentleman—worried over the impression that bodily ills might be creeping upon him—annoyed by this handicap on the handling of his business. (White recalled after leaving the banks that he might have slipped a little on this point.) With the teller, Mr. Gresham stepped into the president's office and showed him the check, calling attention to the unusual amount as the account had been running.

"Taylor—did you ever hear of a case where an impostor got control a man's business and impersonated him so perfectly that he actually got away with it?"

"Not to any such extent as you imply concerning Chandler! It would be practically impossible! You talked with the man yourself—did you notice anything suspicious at the time?"

"Not a thing! If he'd made some of his too-familiar remarks about my wife and daughters,—Chandler's idea of humor, you know,—I'd never have thought of his visit again. But for the first time in my acquaintance with him, the man was a gentleman. And that's rather like scraping off some of the indelible spots from a menagerie-animal."

"Might have been too worried about himself to joke! Nothing wrong with this

signature. A little shaky in spots, but rheumatism would account for that. Why not go see Chase—and Hillman? He would have gone to their banks too."

THIS suggestion was carried out—the impression being in each case that Chandler hadn't been in his usual form when they saw him. After a conference between officials of the three banks, the matter crystallized, next morning, with the unexpected appearance in Chandler's office of a bank detective, and two other plain-clothes men. The detective requested an interview with Chandler at once. Being told that he hadn't yet appeared, he sat down in that gentleman's office to wait—and closely watched the actions of the clerical force when the boss finally came in. If the man *was* an impostor, nobody in his entire outfit seemed to suspect it—and some had been there for a good many years. Upon being shown the ten-thousand-dollar voucher, the supposed Chandler laid it on his desk while he lighted a cigar—then picked it up and wanted to know what was the matter with it. Did he recall signing it? Why—of course he did! Wasn't getting softening of the brain—yet! What was the money for? Well—really—was that any of the detective's business? Yes—it was! Chandler thought not—told the detective that he could either talk sense, keep inside his authority, or get out! For a second or two it was in the detective's mind to arrest the manufacturer—take a chance on "third degree" at the Central Office to get something out of the man which would justify such a proceeding. But—he didn't quite dare. He had no shadow of grounds upon which to base what would be obviously an outrage if the man were innocent. (White knew exactly what was in his mind—and the perspiration was trickling down his back at thought of the possibilities. In any rough handling, some of the almost imperceptible marks on his face might become smudged—and then, well, there was no telling where he would land.) Finally, the detective said:

"Mr. Chandler—the bank people are uneasy about that check for some reason or other. I've got my orders to make what investigation I can. I'm going to fetch two or three of your office force down for a little talk with the inspector at the Central Office. Aint going to hurt 'em none—prob'ly wont keep 'em long—"

"If you've got anything like that on your mind, I'll go down there with them! You can't abuse any of my clerks without grounds for it!"

"Naw! You'll stay right here with one of the men sitting outside, there, till we get back! When we want you, there won't be any doubt about the invitation!"

In the inspector's office John Blake—the head bookkeeper—was asked how long he had known Chandler—whether it would be possible to mistake anyone else for him? Blake smiled pleasantly. He thought an acquaintance of over twenty-five years should enable him to know his employer by sight, anyhow. Maude Walters fairly snapped at the inspector. What sort of a fool did he think she was! Mr. Chandler had been in poor health for a long time—was suffering from rheumatism now, but was under a specialist's treatment and showing signs of improvement. She had noticed that he was less sarcastic and aggressive, at times. This was sheer blind luck for White, inasmuch as it accounted for his milder manner at the banks in a perfectly normal way.

WHEN one of the clerks—Twombly—was questioned, he fairly exploded: Did the inspector think there was another man like Chandler in Greater New York? "Why say! If there were two men in the city with his disposition, when he's in his best form, they'd be either in a museum or playin' the vawdeville circuit." The inspector finally looked at the bank detective and dismissed Chandler's employees with an apology for the trouble they'd been put to. There appeared to be no question whatever that Chandler was Chandler. He'd said unhesitatingly that he signed the check. He was drawing upon his own bank-balance—which was ample. It was emphatically nobody's business what he did with the money. Well—then? What was it all about? The inspector suggested that the bank-officials had better write their apologies to Mr. Chandler—and make them pretty conciliatory.

Meanwhile,—“Burnett” had found it impossible to keep away from the office-building altogether, had been at the end of the hall when the police came up in the elevator and went into his office. He expected to see White dragged out, handcuffed—and was nearly crazy over the whole mess. He couldn't resume his own identity, because nobody would believe that

he wasn't an impostor, even if he knew how to restore his face to its old expression—which he didn't. If he did succeed in doing that, it sent White to State's prison without much doubt. He was like a man in a maze—and this culmination of their experiment proved the final eye-opener which sponged the old offensive manner out of his system. He'd had a convincing demonstration of what he really had been, had seen himself mirrored as others saw him. If White proved straight, eventually gave him back his own identity with signs of marked improvement already showing in it, as they had planned, he thought he'd had a lesson which would insure his treating everyone courteously for the rest of his life.

THERE were many bad moments when Chandler couldn't help doubting White, who had the manufacturer's fate absolutely in his hands. He could remain Chandler—keep Chandler's millions. If anything happened to Sam Wentworth, there wasn't a way in the world by which Chandler could dislodge him. But Pennington White was merely carrying out with his usual thoroughness one of his business ventures. He reinstated Chandler within a month—when his fingers were all nicely healed up. On the following evening the manufacturer had a long talk with Wentworth—finally asking him what he thought would be an acceptable sum to offer White.

"H-m-m-m—do your employees seem to like you a little better, now, than they did? Find anybody at the clubs to dine with you, occasionally—now?"

"Sam—Pen White held a mirror up in front of me until I couldn't help seeing the spots—and he made me keep up my gym-training with the professor until I feel ten years younger! I—I—well, you know—I—I honestly think folks are beginning to like me a little!"

"And—Maude Walters? Seems to me I heard something about her?"

"Maude's going to marry me—to be sure I don't slip back."

"H-m-m—that New Bedford mill's been paying nine per cent right along, hasn't it? Four or five hundred shares might buy you a pretty desirable partner in it—eh? Think that's too much—for what was done to you? For what almost happened to White? Considering the millions he scrupulously gave back—instead of keeping them?"

"Too much? No! I'm damned if it is! I'll offer those shares to him, anyway!"

A
COMPLETE
NOVELETTE



The Crime at the

By DEAN L.

I HAD a feeling all that Saturday that there was trouble brewing. I could not explain it, but I could not overcome it. Of course, the weather may have had something to do with it—I do not pretend to deny that at my age I am slightly susceptible to changes in the weather. It had rained all morning, and the March wind had kept my chimney going *whee-ee* and *whoo-oo* in a most depressing way. Then in the afternoon the rain and wind had stopped, and a fog had begun to roll up. By nightfall this had become so thick that I could see nothing beyond the windows but a curtain of yellowish gray. This was bad enough, for fogs always give me a smothered feeling; but finally, to put the finishing touch to a dismal day, Willoughby had come home with a new game.

I must explain about Willoughby. He is my unmarried brother, and he is Professor of Ancient History at the University. I am told that, once within the confines of this quite worthy institution, he is all that could be desired—a person whose behavior discloses a proper seriousness, and who conducts his classes in an exacting

and excellent manner. But, if this is not a gross exaggeration, then I confess with regret that Willoughby must be the possessor of very eccentric and contradictory complexes.

I may say, freely, that from the moment he steps inside the threshold of the hotel, he tosses aside the loftier side of him as one would toss aside a raincoat. Not only does he show a painful disregard of the dignity of the Willoughby name, but he utterly refuses to take the slightest interest in any of the finer and deeper things which one would suppose a man in his position to value above all others. The most shocking thing about it is that he enjoys attempting the vulgar *patois* of the common people, and seems to see nothing indecent in consorting freely with persons of no importance, if not of undeniably low character.

I have actually heard a bell-boy, unrebuked, call him a "brick" to his face. What the term "brick" may embrace I neither know nor care to know; but the very fact that Willoughby would permit such a menial to address him in the intimate tone which this one used will suffice



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Lafayette Arms

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to show, I think, that at times he is quite impossible.

At one period or another I have been a martyr to a dozen different epidemics in the form of childish pastimes. To keep Willoughby from spending his evenings at worse things, I have permitted myself to be enticed into parcheesi, seven-and-one-half, poker, and innumerable card-games, and, on one occasion, even to take part in a brawling, card-snatching contest known as "the pit," or something of the sort. More recently it has been auction bridge, and the terrible squawks and whistles which Willoughby calls "radio concerts." But I felt that the limit of endurance had been reached when, after dinner on the foggy March evening of which I have spoken, he called me into our sitting-room, eagerly unwrapped a square parcel, and disclosed an outlandish Chinese piece of tomfoolery which he termed "Mah Jongg."

"Willoughby," I said, "I wonder if you will ever realize the proprieties of your position and cease bringing home these infantile amusements."

"Infantile!" he exclaimed. "Why, my dear Keturah, it can't be possible that you

do not know that Mah Jongg is the—ah—the bee's limbs these days."

"I do not care one jot or tittle," I declared, "if it is the bee's limbs, or not the bee's limbs, whatever such nonsense may mean. If it is, as you say, an invention of the heathen Chinees, that is enough for me. We should strive to redeem the heathen, I grant; but I do not see that we are obligated to indulge in his immoral pastimes. If we do, something will happen, mark my words!"

"Now, Ket—"

"Since you decline," I went on quickly, "to spend your evenings as you should—I refer to uplifting pursuits, or even cultivating the acquaintance of persons of your own station in life—let us at least not waste our time upon a game beneath the dignity of Christians. Now euchre and checkers—"

HE interrupted me by making a deprecating noise through his teeth:

"Tsit, tsit, tsit! Euchre and checkers! Here I spend seven hours a day in what I may term close association with all the—ah—have-beens since Adam, and you,

my dear sister, would have me finish off the evening by burying myself in their antiquated games. Ket, I am sometimes tempted—"

"Willoughby," I said firmly, "I have the honor to be christened Keturah, and I see no reason to debase a name of such excellent traditions by shortening it to the undignified sound of 'Ket'!"

"Oh, very well, very well. Keturah it is, then," he replied, his lips twisting up at the corners most irritatingly. "I was merely about to suggest—to breathe the most delicate of hints, as it were—that if you could contrive to—ah—step out of the sweet lavender now and then and—ahem—overlook the fact that our great-great-grandfather came over on the Mayflower, you would not, as the saying is, be always removing the joy from existence."

I REPRODUCE this conversation as an example of the type which frequently passed between us, as well as of the depths of impropriety to which Willoughby so often descends. Of the use of various vulgar terms which he had recently taken up in amazing fashion, since his acquaintance with one Benjamin Scully, I say nothing. It speaks for itself. But imagine anyone overlooking the fact that her great-great-grandfather came over on the Mayflower!

As usual, however, my protests fell on deaf ears. Willoughby would not be happy until he had tried the heathen pastime, and he succeeded in inducing this Scully to come over from his boarding-house a couple of blocks away. This man was one of that lower order, which, as I have said, my brother demeaned himself to accept a state of acquaintance with. He was a detective person and, though of a not unamiable disposition when he had had a good day at locking people up, was deplorably lacking in the most elementary rules of grammar, not to mention rhetoric at all. How the two became acquainted I had not discovered—it was a matter which I feared to inquire into too closely—but Willoughby seemed to take an exceedingly inappropriate pleasure in this man's company. They were often together.

Willoughby was very eager to get another to make a fourth, but all the usual set around the hotel were either out or occupied. In the end the only person available proved to be the switchboard op-

erator, a close-cropped, blonde female person named Miss Tripp, whose turn it happened to be to take the evening off. As might have been expected, Willoughby had the temerity to suggest inviting *her*. This I coldly refused to tolerate for one moment. We were just sitting down to the table, three-handed, therefore, when Henry McAllister, who occupied the corner room on the other side of Willoughby's passed by in the hall with his familiar suit-case in his hand.

"Ah, there, McAllister!" called Willoughby. "You come like a gift from the gods. One moment, sir, one moment."

Mr. McAllister returned to the doorway and regarded us smilingly.

"Put away the hat and coat, my boy," Willoughby directed, "and—ah—as we might express it, park the weekly wash. Then hurry back here, like a good fellow. We're just about to take up the latest invention of the enemies of dull care, and we need you to make a foursome."

"What is it this time?" Mr. McAllister asked. "Oh, I see—Mah Jongg. Hm-m. Excellent! I've had some little experience at it, and I'll be glad to give you what help I can. Pardon me a minute, will you?"

I was pleased that, if I must be dragged into this game, one of the players was to be Mr. McAllister. Though he was only the proprietor of a small, exclusive establishment downtown, where, at astonishing prices, he disposed of various beautiful pets—canaries, cats, pedigreed dogs, and the like—to the better people of the city, I do not hesitate to say that I had always found him a most agreeable type of man. I need not affirm that this was *not* because I was unmarried and he was a personable bachelor of about thirty-five, as some loose-tongued women around the hotel had been base enough to hint, but because in manner and dress he was all that is implied by the term "gentleman." I had more than once, in fact, held him up to Willoughby as an example, but quite without result. In contrast to such persons as Scully, his grammar was irreproachable, and his care of his linen such that even the fairly good laundry of the hotel could not satisfy him. Regularly every Saturday and Tuesday night he carried his soiled clothing out to a nearby laundry and returned with the fresh supply; which was the mission he was apparently returning from now.

He went on to his room at once to leave

his things, but was back shortly; and, Willoughby at last satisfied, we began.

I SHALL not attempt to describe this most nonsensical of pastimes. Suffice it to say that it is played with a swarm of slippery little bamboo-and-ivory blocks which are forever sliding off to the floor. Most of them are defaced with such childish marks as you may observe on a Chinese laundry ticket. You throw dice and build sacred walls and snatch up various ones to meet your needs, all to the accompaniment of barbarous and undignified noises; and as soon as somebody cries out "Mah Jongg" it seems that you must enter into a general squabble about doubling your score and exposed pungs and I know not what foolishness. I have resolutely refused to have anything to do with it since that awful night, but, if I am to judge from Scully's methods, the one who bellows the loudest about green dragons and seasons of the year is entitled to the largest supply of bones.

Willoughby, of course, seemed to derive a great deal of enjoyment from this nonsense, but I found my loathing of it increasing every moment. Perhaps the game was not entirely responsible, for Willoughby, as always, was puffing huge clouds of odorous smoke into the air from a horny, disreputable little pipe which he persists in using, in spite of the fact that I had presented him at Christmas with a patented one guaranteed to remove the nicotine from the tobacco; while Scully, whose taste runs to fat, black cigars, not only contributed to the wretched conditions of the atmosphere but took it upon himself to correct my mistakes in a patronizing way.

To make it more intolerable, I was facing the two windows of the room over Mr. McAllister's shoulders. The fog had deepened still more. In the light from the chandelier it looked like unclean milk flowing against the panes. The sight of this, and the fact that the noises without came to my ears through it in a queer, muffled way, caused me to feel more hemmed in, more tense than ever.

After we had been playing with the blocks for an endless period, like so many children, I pounced upon one which had been discarded by Willoughby.

"Mah Jongg for me!" I declared, and laid my combinations face upward on the table. "I have four chows and a pair of East pungs."

Scully glanced over them, then broke into the rumbling chuckle which is his way of manifesting amusement.

"Some fist!" he exclaimed. "You gummed it again, Miss Witt—I mean," he added hastily, "that aint worth a darn thing. All you got is a couple of winds and four little straights, one of them open in the middle—to say nothing about an extra block. Whereja nab that one, anyhow?"

Mr. McAllister, as usual, endeavored to be more politic.

"I'm afraid there must have been some slight mistake, Miss Witt," he told me. "Your hand is—er—not of any great value in its present form. If, however—"

"Value!" Scully interrupted. "Say, that mess is worth about as much as a plugged German mark in a French hock-shop! As a Mah Jongg player, Miss Witt, I don't think—"

"I am perfectly aware that you don't," I retorted tartly. "Nor can anyone else be expected to when she has been asphyxiating for an hour from the fumes of that offensive tobacco you and Professor Witt have been burning up as fast as you could light it. I can understand a gentleman smoking a nice, clean pipe, or a common person deriving a certain amount of low pleasure from a neat cigar, but how any *being* can put such things into his mouth as those bedraggled, noisome objects you and he—ugh!" I broke off. "My throat is raw."

I was glad to see that for once Scully was taken aback. He gaped at me a moment, and then,

"Oh, all right, all right," he muttered. "If that's the way you feel about it!" And he grumpily smothered the tip of his cigar in the ashes at the bottom of the tray. Willoughby, grinning in his trying way, laid aside his pipe.

MR. McALLISTER had been amusedly regarding us all. Now he rose to his feet.

"If you'll pardon me a moment, folks," he said, smiling, "I believe I can offer something to relieve Miss Witt's throat. I have some excellent lozenges in my room which are made just for that purpose. Would you care to try them, Miss Witt? I'll be glad to get them for you."

Under the circumstances, I would have been glad to try anything, so Mr. McAllister hurried into his own room, where we

heard him puttering around for a minute or two. He came back, then, with a small box containing several little menthol lozenges. I took one of these, tried it, and found it very beneficial. Mr. McAllister, of course, proffered the box to the others, but, upon discovering that there were not enough left to go around, rose in some embarrassment and went back for a fresh box. While Scully fidgeted and Willoughby looked abused, he spent several minutes finding another, during which time I heard him softly whistling some queer, obscure ballad. Mr. McAllister's one fault, as I had noticed several times lately, was a tendency when preoccupied to whistle queer, obscure ballads, slightly off the key. At length, though, he returned triumphantly and apologetically tendered the new supply.

"Now that we're all—ah—restored to health and happiness," sighed Willoughby, "I trust we can go on. May I suggest that we endeavor to—ah—strike it up a little? It's ten-thirty now and we'll just about be able to complete another game before my fair sister orders both of you to—ahem—what is it, Benjamin?—take the atmosphere."

ACCORDINGLY, we resumed the Chinese nonsense; but we had scarcely gotten started on the puerile performance of rebuilding the wall when the thing which all along I had felt in my bones would happen burst upon us. And, without stretching the truth, I may say that it dwarfed even my worst fears.

All of a sudden I heard the elevator gates down the hall open with a crash, then footsteps come pounding along the carpet toward us. The next moment a figure appeared in the doorway, a wild-eyed, fat little creature with beads of perspiration shining upon his forehead. It was Armand Papin, the proprietor of the Lafayette Arms. His hands were actually shaking and, had I not been so keyed up, it would have occurred to me that he was mouthing in a very silly way. After staring at us a moment, breathless, he began to bubble into hoarse sounds:

"Professair Witt! Monsieur McAllistair! S-S-Scullee! . . . Ah, I 'ave ze *beaucoup* relief zat I 'ave fin' you 'ere! A terreeb' zing 'as 'appen! Zere 'as been a—"

Seeming to become aware of my presence, at this moment, he gulped and hesitated; but he could not contain his news.

"Zere 'as been a—a crime downstairs!" he gasped. "Quick! Come wiz me, I implore you. Madame Wainwright—she 'as—she 'as—oh, *mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*"

"Mrs. Wainwright!" cried Willoughby. "Come, come, my dear fellow, pull yourself together! What has happened to Mrs. Wainwright?"

"She 'as been—what you call rob'!" moaned Papin. "Somezing it is also ze mattair wiz her. Monsieur Wainwright, he—he cannot make her to awaken. I zink she is—is—*dead!*"

CHAPTER II

AT the man's frantic entrance I had risen with such a start that I had tilted the table, causing the entire mess of puns to slide to the floor; but now, becoming aware of a most peculiar weakness in my knees, I thought it advisable to sink back, promptly, into my chair again. I cannot describe the sensation of utter insubstantiality which assailed me.

The Wilbur Wainwrights, I should perhaps explain, were an elderly couple occupying a suite of two rooms two floors below us at the corner of the wing. He was practically doddering and did little more than dabble in grain to keep up appearances; but she, although amiable, past sixty, and quite fleshy, was one of those incomprehensible members of my sex who endeavor, by determined effort, to prevent others from discerning their ages. I would never think for a moment of allowing an unkind word to pass my lips about the dead; but it is beyond denial that Mrs. Wainwright, who was extremely wealthy in her own name—vulgarily wealthy, I have heard others term it—exhibited a certain tendency toward vanity in the matter of displaying her riches.

Of course, her jewels *were* remarkable, and I suppose she can scarcely be blamed for taking pains to see that the finer ones should be prominently exhibited on special occasions. With one exception, however, they were always promptly returned to a safe-deposit box afterward. This exception, a most lavish diamond-and-platinum lavalier, had so captured her fancy that she kept it at hand, in spite of my advice, and wore it openly in the hotel as if it were an ordinary trinket.

As I had often warned my friend, Agatha

Peddy, I knew that something would come of this reckless flaunting of wealth; and now at Papin's cry I was sure that somebody had murdered her in cold blood and taken the lavalier.

"Murdered! Robbed!" I gasped at last. "What was she robbed of? Was—was it—"

"Ah, zat I do not know," Papin replied wildly. "But wait! I believe—*oui, oui*, zat mus' be it! Ze lavalier! I understand Monsieur to say somezing about ze lavalier!"

"There!" I found strength to mutter. "I told you so!"

The three men in the room with me had all been struck momentarily motionless. I have a vague impression of Scully—according to the best police etiquette, I suppose—standing with his mouth agape, and of Mr. McAllister crying: "Good God, not *dead!*" But I cannot vouch for this. I am sure, however, that my brother, oddly enough, was the first to recover from the trance. With a sharp "Come on!" he brushed past Papin into the hall; whereupon the other three regained sufficient possession of their senses to follow him.

I was still affected by that curious feeling of airiness, but, if I do say it myself, Keturah Alexandria Witt has never been the person to shrink from her duty, unpleasant or dangerous though it may be. Knowing that my advice and assistance should be needed, I managed, somehow, to drag myself to my feet and proceed, if a trifle unsteadily, after the men. Within thirty seconds, the five of us had descended two floors in the elevator, passed along the hall, and entered Mrs. Wainwright's room at the corner—Papin urging us in desperate whispers, every foot of the way, to keep quiet for the good God's sake, and not arouse the other inhabitants of the Arms; a most useless and irritating procedure, as everyone was reduced to absolute silence except the foolish little man himself.

I HAD expected the room to be a scene of terrifying disorder, but such was not the case. Indeed, Mrs. Wainwright was lying quietly upon the bed, and I might have thought her merely resting had it not been for the startled, almost horrified, expression upon her face, and the fact that her eyes, which were half-open, were fixed in a queer way on the ceiling. I knew what that meant—I saw it once upon the face of a poor fellow who had been struck by a

motor-car—and I regret to confess that the sight caused me once more to seek a chair and momentarily close my eyes.

The most distressing feature of the matter was that seventy-year-old Mr. Wainwright himself, a bath robe concealing his night-clothes, was on his knees at the side of the bed. He was pawing feebly at his wife's hands and crying over and over again in a quavering voice: "Anna, Anna, speak to me! What's happened, Anna? *Anna!*"

I remember it striking me as surprising even then that, while Scully, Papin, and Mr. McAllister looked on at this scene in a manner so helpless as almost to tempt me to use the word doltish, it was Willoughby who took charge of things. He stepped around to Mr. Wainwright's side and endeavored to quiet him with soothing words. At first the old man, hardly aware of the presence of anyone, merely brushed him aside and went on with his "Anna, Anna!" But eventually Willoughby was able to draw him away to a couch.

And then, quite unexpectedly, Mr. Wainwright ceased his calls and became limp in Willoughby's arms. Thereupon, my brother, with a gentleness that I scarcely looked for, stretched him out on the couch and drew his bath robe around him.

Scully came to himself at that moment and crossed over to his side.

"Holy St. Patrick, Prof!" I heard him mumble. "He aint a goner, too, is he?"

Willoughby lifted one of Mr. Wainwright's hands and felt for his pulse.

"Merely fainted," he said. "Quite a merciful way out of his troubles for the time being. The pulse is weak, though. A most severe shock, Benjamin, a most severe shock. . . . Mr. Papin, it would be well, sir, for you to hurry around to Doctor McHale—ah, by the way, have you any idea of what has occurred here?"

"*Non, non, non!*" the proprietor answered, bursting into an excited gabble—of mixed French and bad English. "*Je ne sais pas*, Professair Witt! It is zis way: I 'appen to be in ze office when ze signal on ze switchboard flash. Mademoiselle Jones 'as step' into ze lounge to deliver a message to some one, so I ansair, myself. It is Monsieur Wainwright. He is call' somezing about Madame his wife, and ze doctaire, and—and a lavalier. I rush right up. He admit me and again implore for ze assistance. Zen he hurry to ze bed, ze same as you see him now, and after zat I am not able to get ze—how you say?—

explain from him. Zen I zink of Monsieur Scullee—I 'ave perceive him on his way up to zis room—and I go quick up for him and for you. Zis is terreeb'! Ze Arms it is ruin'—ruin'!"

THE sight of this selfish, rotund French creature lamenting the fact that his wretched hotel might suffer from the tragedy, and thinking nothing of the misfortunes of the old couple, aroused me from my apathy more quickly than anything else could have done—with the possible exception of aromatic spirits of ammonia. I sprang to my feet and was about to lose my dignity by censuring him in scathing terms when Willoughby took the matter out of my hands.

"Well, well, no need to lose your head, if you—ah—are sure you are gifted with one, sir!" he replied in some annoyance. "It is quite unlikely that the world-renowned Arms will disintegrate before morning at the earliest, and in the meantime Mr. Wainwright here seems to have a prior claim on our attention. Suppose you run around to Dr. McHale's room and request him to come over. There now, be quick! That's a good fellow."

Papin, still foolishly flinging his hands about him as though calling the heavens to witness the unmerited punishment that had been visited upon him, pattered out. Willoughby then drew the sheet up over Mrs. Wainwright's face and turned to join Benjamin Scully. The detective, with Mr. McAllister beside him, was already grimly puttering about, fiddling with various things.

Determined now to do my part to bring to justice the fiend who could molest such harmless old people, I remained right behind them; but truth compels me to admit that our efforts to discover anything helpful met with very indifferent success. No intruder came to light, nor anything unusual. Neither could any clues (I believe that is the word) be discovered anywhere, although Willoughby descended to his hands and knees and, in this unprofessional attitude, with his glasses close to the carpet—and frequently falling off—crawled from one end of the room to the other. In addition, the transom over the hall door was found to be closed, and all the windows, with the exception of the tiny one in the bathroom, securely locked. This was open about six inches, apparently to permit an indirect flow of fresh air into the

room—I leave mine open at night for the same purpose—and was obviously too small for even a child to pass through.

I observed Scully peering at each window-sill and sash in turn. If, as I judged, he was looking for dust in which to find prints or marks, however, he was disappointed. This much I will say for fat little Monsieur Papin: he trains his chambermaids to do their dusting well, and not to skim over the windows with a lick and a promise.

Just as we had finished this hasty inspection, Papin returned with Dr. McHale, and then slipped away again. The doctor, one of your young but efficient modern practitioners, nodded to me briefly, then proceeded to the bed. But, after being engaged with Mrs. Wainwright for only a moment, he shook his head regretfully.

"Nothing I can do," he murmured.

WILLOUGHBY put a question in a low tone: "Heart failure, doctor?"

Dr. McHale nodded. "Feared something like this would happen sooner or later," he explained. "Bad shape for a long time, very bad; but—some big start or scare must have precipitated it. What happened?"

"Unfortunately, we do not know, sir," Willoughby answered. "There is some talk of robbery, a missing lavalier—"

"Lavalier!" Dr. McHale exclaimed. "Good Lord, not the De Marquis lavalier!"

"I am inclined to fear so; but it appears that our curiosity must remain unsatisfied until the old gentleman recovers consciousness. Incidentally, I think, sir, that he needs your services more than the—ah—more than she."

The doctor nodded and drew up the sheet again. Turning his attention to Mr. Wainwright, he soon pronounced the old gentleman's case nothing more than a bad shock. While he was taking measures to revive him, the rest of us entered the adjoining room, Mr. Wainwright's, and inspected it also. But we found nothing unusual here, either.

The room revealed only one thing different from the other one. Instead of the small bathroom window being open, it was securely fastened, and a larger one in the bedroom itself raised about half-way. I was careful to observe the proprieties when venturing about a man's bedroom; but, even so, it appeared that nothing else was

CHAPTER III

unlocked or in disorder; nor was any object marked in the least.

My brother, of course, would not rest easily until he had leaned out of the window at a break-neck angle and peered downward. I felt it my duty as his older sister to remain at his side, with one hand securely grasping the tail of his coat. But he gained nothing for his pains. The horrible fog was too thick for our eyes to penetrate. In fact, we could do little more than discern the vague blur of the street lamps two floors below. Whether there were any protuberances beneath us in the red brickwork of the Arms on which a murderer might ascend and later make his escape, I could not tell. I had often observed to Agatha, however, that the architects of the building had been anything but liberal with ornamental work.

Willoughby turned back from the window after a few minutes there, and gave his attention to the door of the room. It was equipped with one of those new-fangled spring-locks, which are so rapidly replacing the excellent separate bolt and latch that were considered plenty good enough for people in my younger days; but it proved to be safely locked. Meanwhile, Mr. McAllister and Scully were going through the clothes closets in both rooms one by one; but they quickly returned to us and pronounced them in good order—a matter which anyone could see for himself.

BY this time the Coroner, who happened to live only a few blocks away, had arrived—I do not know how he had learned of the matter so soon, unless Papin himself had called him in order to get his ear early and beg him to proceed as quietly as possible—and I decided to go. I did not desire to remain any longer in a suite where such queer things could happen. Leaving word that I would remain up in case I was needed, I made a hurried, though not undignified, exit, and returned to our own sitting-room.

But for once, even the log fire, which Willoughby and I pay three prices to be furnished with, did not succeed in reviving my spirits. In the fog, which was still churning sluggishly against the windows, I kept imagining I saw the startled, staring eyes of the dead woman downstairs; and this so increased the unpleasant chill that was creeping over me that I finally rose and did what I should have done hours ago—barred out the sight of it by drawing the shades.

IT was all of an hour before the men re-turned; then the three of them came trooping in at once. Scully was looking down in the mouth, and Mr. McAllister tired; but Willoughby surprised me again by showing no signs of fatigue whatever. He took a position before the hearth, where he stood gazing into the fire and spinning his watch-charm around in his fingers—a habit he frequently falls into when his mind is not on his immediate surroundings. His eyes had a peculiar light in them. I was aghast to see, also, that his trousers had a huge rent at one knee.

Incidentally, the shoes of all of them were plentifully smeared with mud, which proceeded to drop off now and then in little chunks upon my Turkish rug.

"Well," I said sharply, when they seemed disposed to remain like a flock of sheep and let the silence continue indefinitely, "if you men are not all walking in your sleep, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what has been going on. Have you learned—I suppose I should say 'stumbled upon'—anything helpful?"

Willoughby did not appear to hear, and Scully merely sank into a chair with a curt wave of the hand meant to indicate, I took it, that I need not inquire of him. Mr. McAllister, however, seeing that neither of the others showed any disposition to answer, took the burden upon himself.

"I'm afraid I must admit we haven't, Miss Witt," he explained. "We've been over the room again from top to bottom with the Coroner, and all around the courtyard and the bottom of the hotel, but we couldn't find much worth mentioning. The brickwork at the corner of the building near that open window in Mr. Wainwright's room would make a sort of crude ladder, however—I mean every fifth row of bricks, or so, is set out a little so as to make the wall look a bit less flat—and a chap who was a pretty clever climber—"

"Ah! A ladder! I cried. "I see."

"Glad to hear it," Scully put in rudely. "That's a damn'—darn sight more than we could do. The fog is so blamed thick out there we might just about as well saved ourselves the trouble of poking around in it. All we did was crack our fool shins on a lot of coal bins and things. And as for that 'ladder'—bah! A lot of good that'll do us! There's a cement walk running around the bottom of the corner under it,

so if anybody did a hot foot down those bricks he didn't have to worry his head about leaving any footprints."

Ignoring my stern look, he lighted another of the odious fat cigars and puffed awhile. Then—

"I don't think nobody got down that way, anyhow," he continued. "The Prof here," ("Prof" was the undignified term by which he regularly referred to Willoughby, and which, by the way, Willoughby shamelessly made no effort to put a stop to) "the Prof here tried to climb up a little ways to see how the going was, and he sure saw! Lost his footing or something, and—and—er—" He stuttered, glanced uncomfortably at Willoughby's damaged trouser-leg, and stopped.

"You don't need to finish it," I assured him severely. "I can see the result for myself. The fog seems to have done one good thing at least: it concealed from the public another disgraceful fall in the family dignity. But what about the Coroner? What did he say? Has Mr. Wainwright recovered consciousness yet? Was his wife really robbed of the De Marquis lavalier? How—"

HE had the impudence to stop me by tossing his arms in the air over his head.

"One at a time, one at a time!" he cried. "Give a guy a chance."

"You have it now," I retorted. "Say something, sir, and don't sit there acting like an—an outraged billiken. What about the Coroner?"

"Oh, he's been over the ground," he growled. "Didn't find a darn thing either, any more'n I did. The lavalier's been nabbed and the crook's made a clean getaway. That's the whole works in a nutshell—and I hope you're satisfied!"

"Well, not quite the 'whole works', Mr. Scully," Mr. McAllister corrected mildly. "Mr. Wainwright gave us a *little* help, anyhow, and it may—"

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "Mr. Wainwright has recovered, then?"

"He's recovered consciousness, Miss Witt, but he's pretty badly shaken. He came to just a few minutes after you left, but, he was so—er—so wrought up at first about his wife, it was quite a while before we could get any information out of him. He managed to tell us at length, though, that he and Mrs. Wainwright had gone to bed at the usual time—"

"That must have been about a quarter to nine, then," I informed them promptly. "Everybody knows that the Wainwrights have always been very regular in their habits and always retire early . . . a procedure," I added, with a glance at Willoughby's back, "which others would do well to imitate. Go on, Mr. McAllister."

"He says," Mr. McAllister continued, "that he fell asleep almost immediately. Later on he woke up with a start and heard his wife calling him. As the door between their rooms was closed—they always seem to have left it that way at night—and as he was still confused with sleep, he was not able to catch what she was saying. He is positive he heard her call: 'Wilbur, Wilbur, quick! There's—' but that's the only thing he *is* positive of. He believes that she said something about a key, but he admits that it may have been 'me,' or 'she,' or 'he,' or some other sound like that. He simply didn't understand. At any rate—"

"Key," muttered Willoughby. "See, three, flee, be, tree, free. Hm-m. Key. Key!"

"At any rate," Mr. McAllister went on, when Willoughby had finished this nonsensical jargon, "he listened for a second or two—he was still barely half-awake, you must realize—and then, when he heard no more, he hurried out of bed and into Mrs. Wainwright's room. He didn't encounter anyone, or see anything suspicious. But when he got the lights on he found his wife sitting up straight in bed. Her face was working, and she was pointing at her dresser and trying hard to say something. He had just time to catch the word 'lavalier', and notice that a large pin-cushion was missing, when all of a sudden she collapsed."

"Pin-cushion!"

"Yes, Miss Witt. He doesn't seem able to recall clearly what he did after that; but he has an impression of rushing to the door to run out for help; and of accidentally knocking against the telephone table, and, that reminding him of the office, catching up the telephone and using it, instead.

"That's practically the whole story, except for this: that pin-cushion which was missing was Mrs. Wainwright's secret hiding-place for her De Marquis lavalier—it had a trick to it, a hollow center, or something like that—and Mr. Wainwright had seen her put it away in it before he went into his own room to go to bed. We

hunted high and low, but pin-cushion and lavalieri are both gone!"

"And said lavalieri," Scully grimly declared, "set the old lady back just seven thousand five hundred iron men—and that was five years ago. Think what it'd be worth now!"

"Strange, very strange!" mused Willoughby, suddenly coming out of his trance and beginning to pace up and down the room. "Unquestionably there is something very peculiar here. True, the jewel is gone, but that should be a secondary consideration. The real gist of the matter lies in this: that old lady's face shows she had been startled—ah—frightened to death, in fact. But how, and by what? And who would benefit? And what was she trying to tell her husband about—"

"The key?" I finished for him. "You don't mean to say you men failed to find out what she meant by that! That would explain everything."

"Ah," he responded, stopping in front of us and balancing on the balls of his feet, "now you have put your finger on the very apex of the matter. My dear Keturah, there is no key—"

"Of course not! The one who stole the lavalieri certainly took—"

"—Missing," he interrupted. "The only key that seems as if it might have been the one she referred to is one to a small jewel-case upon her dresser. According to her husband, however, she had never made use of this case except for more or less trifling trinkets, and, as it happens, it not only did not seem to have been tampered with—it was well filled, in fact—but the key to it was in the lock."

"IN that case," I told him firmly, "it is very simple. It is merely a matter of discovering who knew Mrs. Wainwright's secret hiding-place. One of them will be the guilty one, of course."

"Yeh, awful simple, aint it?" Scully put in with what sounded suspiciously like irony. "But, as it stands, there were just three people alive—so Wainwright says—who were onto that little gag the old lady thought so safe. And those three were her herself, and her husband, and her companion, Miss Bristol."

"Humph," I said. "If I didn't know Miss Bristol for a respectable little woman, I would suggest that you question her."

"There," he replied, "aint I always said great minds run in the same rut—only one

always runs after. . . . That's just what I done, not more than a quarter of an hour after Papin called us down to the room. That companion left early this evening so as to get everything set for a bridge club she's entertaining, and that, as I see it, would about let her out. Just the same, I figured I better phone her house to see if she was there. Well, she was. She answered, herself. She lives 'way down on the South Side, so nothin' short of an airplane could of got her from here to there between the time old Wainwright heard his wife call out and the time I talked to her. Besides, I heard the gabble of the rest of the hens over the phone."

"Are you sure it was her voice, Mr. Scully?" Mr. McAllister asked.

"Oh, of course, I aint *dead certain*," Scully admitted. "But, if it wasn't her, it was a darn smart faker, take it from me. I managed to keep her talking till Papin and a clerk and a bell-boy had each had a listen in; and every mother's son of 'em swore it was her, and no mistake."

"At the same time, my dear Benjamin," Willoughby remarked, "it might be the part of wisdom to give that little party the—ah—once across, as they say. Sometimes such things turn out to be—what shall I term it?—camouflage."

"Leave it to your Uncle Fuller," was Scully's confident reply. "I'll pull that party inside out, and when I get through I'll either know it's on the square, or that I got a couple dozen of the neatest liars this side of Halifax to keep an eye on."

"I wonder," Mr. McAllister suggested thoughtfully, "if it mightn't be a good idea to find out everybody Mrs. Wainwright knew whose name sounds like 'key', or 'see', or anything like that, and then ask each one to account for his movements tonight."

"Yeh, that's one of the first lines anybody with half a head on his shoulders would follow," Scully responded, getting to his feet. "But I been in this game twenty years, McAllister my boy, and I never found a case yet where these big jobs could be cleared up so easy as just diggin' out somebody with a name like 'key,' and askin' him where he was at ten o'clock. Yeh. And the worst of it is, it—well, it puts me in one devil of a hole!"

"A hole, my dear Benjamin?" Willoughby echoed. "How?"

Scully tossed his cigar-stump into our fire. "The tip's out," he answered gloom-

ily, wiping his damp forehead with a large cotton handkerchief which could have been improved by washing, "that there's a big shake-up on the detective force comin'; and I only been in plain clothes a few months so I guess I'll be one of the first to get the ax. I was right here on the ground when this happened, so they'll dump this job on me; and if I could clear it up it'd be a big feather in my cap, of course. But I got a hunch right now the bottom'll fall out of the whole *blank* business right from the start. The h—the deuce of it is I got a brand new kid out at the house, and a flock of hospital bills, and a mortgage comin' due next month, and—oh, *blank* it, it's just a case of me clearin' it up or clearin' out!"

Willoughby was studying the detective with considerable sympathy.

"Well, well, Benjamin," he replied after a moment, "tomorrow is another day, and it's too early in the case to—ah—voice the blues, as we might put it. To recall the immortal proverb, 'the darkest hour is just before the dawn.' Before we part for the night, however, has it occurred to you that the alarm came just as we were getting started on the last game of Mah Jongg, in other words about ten-thirty? Sometimes these little points turn out to be—ah—quite important, do they not?"

CHAPTER IV

IF ever I had any desire to see the proprietor of the Lafayette Arms put to the torture—and I do not apologize for admitting that there were moments when I had—that desire was almost satisfied in that first awful day following the demise of Mrs. Wainwright.

The fat and usually smug Papin seemed more than half demented. He was rushing around like a madman, trying to hush the guests up, and hush the bell-boys up, and hush the reporters and police up; in fact, hush up everybody and everything connected with the case. Needless to say, this only made things worse. He was continually mopping his shiny round head and volubly bewailing his troubles to anyone who was stupid enough to be cornered by him; and I would not have been surprised to see him literally burst into atoms from the pressure of his emotions; a matter which I am sure most of us could have viewed with considerable equanimity.

I must say, though, there was reason a-plenty for his condition. The Arms, which has always been a fairly well-ordered, conservative family hotel, and which, I am glad to state, has had the good sense to preserve a few of the sensible old customs at which the present mad generation turns up its powdered nose, was all but demoralized. There was a feeling of mystery, even a certain amount of apprehension, about the place and everyone in it. At almost all hours of the day and evening you would come upon little groups of people whispering on the stair-landings or in the halls. Reporters were swarming everywhere, impertinent creatures with caps and fountain-pens who presumed to ask questions of people to whom they had never been introduced, to say nothing of snapping their foolish cameras at everything. And, finally, in avoiding these odiously inquisitive newspaper men, one was apt, as like as not, to open a door and have a detective person pop out like a Jack-in-the-box.

I wonder sometimes how I ever lived through it—especially in view of the depressing actions of my brother.

I MAY say without exaggeration that I have never known Willoughby to show himself to poorer advantage. To begin with, one thing is beyond question: He did not go to bed at all the previous night after I delicately hinted to Scully and Mr. McAllister that the hour was growing late. He is much addicted to the unhealthy habit of sitting before the fire, smoking, until all hours; and when I arose in the morning I was greeted with the sight of a disgracefully large amount of tobacco ashes upon his tray and an even larger amount scattered about my precious rug in front of his arm-chair.

This was exasperating enough, but a worse discovery awaited me. Upon going down to breakfast, I found him at our table ahead of me, mumbling to himself as he ate, and—I scarcely expect any well-bred lady or gentleman to credit it—utterly oblivious of the fact that he had forgotten his collar and cravat!

"Willoughby!" I cried. "Are you walking in your sleep?"

"Eh—what's that?" he asked, dropping his soiled spoon on the tablecloth as though startled. "Oh—ah—yes, yes. Yes, indeed—I mean, no. That is—ah—what did you say, my dear Keturah?"

I proceeded, thereupon, to acquaint him with his predicament. He refused, however, to look upon the matter as serious, declined to go upstairs at once and complete his toilet, and actually had the audacity to wink across at me as he wrapped his pocket-handkerchief about his exposed neck. A pocket-handkerchief! At times I am unable to do anything with Willoughby.

Of course, I did not seriously think that my brother was walking in his sleep, though there is some reason to believe he does even that at times, especially after wasting the afternoon rolling little rubber balls here and there around the park in a frivolous game called golf. But I am bound to say that all that morning—which was Sunday—he demeaned himself as one in a trance. Now that I think of it, he concluded the day by so far forgetting his position and the dignity of the family name as to do a thing which no Witt—but of that later.

At any rate, after spending the best part of the day puttering about the building and grounds in a manner that in one of inferior caste might justify the term "snooping," he finally strayed into our sitting-room, where, with Adonis curled up at my feet, I was improving my mind with good reading. Adonis, I may have neglected to mention, is a most lovable and fluffy French poodle which Mr. McAllister had given me some time ago and I had since taught several captivating tricks.

"Well, well, my dear Keturah," Willoughby said, "it is fortunate to find you here. I—"

"Fortunate!" I retorted. "I have been right here in this chair, with this book—"

"Ah yes, good old Philpott on the Primary Principles of Psychology, is it not? And Adonis, too. Dear little Adonis, the—ah—leading ankle twerker of the—"

"—Since dinner," I finished coldly, ignoring the crude reference to my pet. Between Adonis and Willoughby there has always been a sort of mutual distrust, if not an actual antagonism. "But I suppose one who has been roaming about the hotel like a lost soul can scarcely be expected to notice anybody or anything. While I am at it, I confess, Willoughby, that I thoroughly disapprove of this conduct."

"Tsit, tsit, tsit! You don't say so," he replied, with that little upward twist to the corners of his mouth that I find so irritating. . . . "Yet, now that you

mention it, I seem to have a faint recollection of having heard you use that same phraseology before. However, let us not go into that. What I came to ask you is whether you would care to accompany me on a little tour around the parks—as the saying is, on a little joy-ride in the old vehicle?"

Willoughby is the possessor of a long, low, extremely jolty roadster, and he is accustomed every Sunday afternoon to go out for a ride about Forest Park. I always take care to remain out of these excursions, for two reasons: One is that he never fails to make a long stop at the zoo, which seems to have a most astonishing fascination for him, but, because of certain indefinable odors, has precisely the opposite effect on me; and the other is that he is in no sense of the word a finished driver. He appears to labor under the fixed impression that an automobile which travels at less than thirty-five miles to the hour or negotiates any street-corner on more than two wheels is not being properly handled. Consequently, just as I had had the good sense to decline his invitation every Sunday for the last six months, I declined it now.

AFTER disconsolately wandering about in search of some of the hotel children to take along with him—Willoughby seems to take a great deal more interest in such noisy youngsters than in their elders—and finding none of them available, he finally trundled himself off alone. I did not see him again all that afternoon.

Just after sundown I had occasion to go into Mrs. Wainwright's room at the corner of the wing. As Miss Bristol was extremely busy with preparations, and the other people at the hotel appeared too eager to gossip about the affair to think of aiding her or the bereaved old gentleman, I had offered somewhat earlier to do what I could for them. Having been given an inch, Miss Bristol had taken a mile. She was obliged, she had said, to look after a number of details at the exclusive undertaking parlors to which Mrs. Wainwright's body had been conveyed after being released by the Coroner, and she had begged me to put away the great variety of garments she had scattered around pell-mell when selecting the poor woman's last costume. I had, of course, consented, and when Mr. Wainwright also went out on some errand or other I seized the occasion to start to work.

I cannot pretend that my task was a welcome one. The rooms, indeed, were now quiet and peaceful once more; but, after all, the scene where one has not only been robbed but frightened to death is scarcely calculated to inspire pleasant reflections.

In addition, I was handicapped by inability to open one of the bureau drawers. At length, in my search for a key to fit it, I crossed into Mr. Wainwright's room. There, in a dresser exactly similar to the dead woman's, I found a key which looked promising. As my exertions had brought out a gentle perspiration upon me, however, I rose, opened the nearest window, and thrust my head out for a breath of cool, fresh air. I did not realize at the time that it was the same large window which we had found raised the night of the tragedy.

I hope I will not be accused of exaggeration if I say that, had it not been for the fact that I never permit myself to indulge in the inexcusable habit of fainting, the sight which greeted me would certainly have caused me to drop across the sill.

I found myself staring straight into the face of a man who was clinging to the wall of the building just a few feet away from the window!

He had evidently reached there by mounting upon the ledges created by every fifth row of bricks at the corner being set out an inch or so from the others; and his position, as he held on with one hand and stretched out the other toward me, was precarious in the extreme.

MY first thought was that I had surprised the despoiler of Mrs. Wainwright returning for another dreadful visit; but the next instant, what was my utter astonishment to perceive his real identity in spite of the gathering darkness. It was no one else but my brother.

"Willoughby!" I gasped, not entirely able to restrain my feelings. "Willoughby *Witt*!"

He seemed as much taken aback as I had been. Indeed, he gave a sudden lurch, and was obliged to withdraw his extended arm somewhat hastily in order to recover his balance.

"Ah yes," he remarked then. "Yes, yes, it is I, indeed, Keturah—somewhat shaken, if I may so express it, but still intact! Quite a close call, eh? Might I suggest, my dear sister, that in future you—ah—

modulate your tone when—ahem—popping out of windows so unexpectedly? That piercing note—"

"Willoughby," I interrupted sternly, "go down from there this instant! In the name of heaven, what are you doing in such a place?"

"What am I doing?" he echoed. "Of course, you would ask that. I can see, myself, that there may appear to be some slight need of elucidation. Allow me to explain, therefore, that I am merely endeavoring to determine for my own satisfaction the exact—ah—difficulties which would be encountered were one—were any living creature, in fact—to attempt to use this corrugated brickwork as a means of entering the room in which you stand. On this question I can state frankly that I am now much relieved."

"I shall not be, sir," I told him, "until you lower yourself to a position of safety."

"I am five feet, ten inches in height," he went on thoughtfully, "yet, as you observed, I was unable to reach the sill there—in fact, there was a discrepancy between us of a yard at least. I realize, however, that this is not conclusive. A giant, now, or an acrobat, or a contortionist, let us say—"

"Willoughby!" I stopped him once more. "Do you realize that there are two small boys down on the street watching your antics already? Do you want the whole neighborhood to gather and stare? If you have no regard for the name of your forefathers, at least do not be so rash as to overlook the fact that you are in danger."

"Danger? Ah, yes, that is a point not to be ignored, but I think the crisis is passed now. At the moment when you—ah—appeared upon the scene—"

"There is a cement walk below you," I said coldly, "to say nothing of a stone balustrade. Were you to fall upon that, there is no telling what might come of it. As your older sister, I demand that you remove yourself from that undignified posture without a moment's delay."

"At once, Keturah, at once. Before doing so, however, may I invite your attention to the smoothness of this wall, its utter freedom from foot-holds, except the ones I am using, its lack of ornamentation, and—"

"You may not!" I snapped. "If you do not leave there immediately, I shall request the fire department to come and dislodge you."

This measure, as I expected, did not prove necessary. My incorrigible brother sighed and reluctantly began to lower himself. I refused to budge or remove my watchful eye from him until he had half climbed and half slid down to the pavement below.

THAT same evening, after supper, I paid a short call on Agatha Peddy, an elderly, maiden lady like myself. Agatha, who is a woman of the deepest refinement, lives on the floor below us. We had a very satisfactory talk about the awful state into which the Arms had fallen, and, after freely expressing my opinions upon the matter, I left, feeling much encouraged. But, as I was stepping out of her room into the hallway before the "dove cote," the effect was quite spoiled by another encounter with my brother.

The "dove cote"—Agatha and I called it that from the billing-and-cooing newlyweds who had recently moved out—was a two-room suite directly over the Wainwright suite, and exactly similar in every particular. Owing to the fact that it had had to be replastered, it was at present in a state of indescribable disorder, with ladders and workmen's utensils scattered around haphazardly, to say nothing of a heavy coating of plaster dust over everything. And right in the middle of this mess was Willoughby.

As I stood watching him through the open door, almost too given to despair to interrupt, he was puttering about from window to window, peering at the sash of each one, tinkering with the lock, and then opening it and staring at the window-sill; all the time serenely unaware, of course, of the havoc he was wreaking upon his Sunday best.

When I did finally put a stop to this reckless ruination of good clothing and demanded an explanation, he was very vague about the matter. He seemed in high spirits, but would say little more than that he had been "covering all the approaches." I took this to mean that he thought some one might have gained access to the large window that had been found open in Mr. Wainwright's room by lowering himself in some way from this empty suite, and I questioned him about that. But he said he thought not. At any rate, he had not found any marks, and all the windows had been securely locked. He refused to tell me any more.

I had not fully recovered from the depression produced by these two affairs when still another example of his carelessness came to my notice. This time I caught sight of him in the bell-boys' hallway near the office. He had actually gathered no less than four of them around him, and they were all whispering eagerly together. Declining to notice this unpardonable breach of good form, I passed on in cold silence; but I knew that I had caught sight of money passing between them.

I may add that, as a result of the wall-climbing escapade and Willoughby's other activities during this unhallowed Sunday, his best suit was in such a state that I felt obliged to present it to the janitor.

CHAPTER V

THE inquest was held the following morning, Monday. A coroner's jury, consisting of a half-dozen unprepossessing, weary-looking individuals apparently recruited at random from the highways and byways, met at the undertaker's parlors at eight o'clock. After listening uninterestedly while the Coroner obliged us all to go into a thousand tiresome details about the matter, they did just what might be expected of men. They brought in a verdict to the effect that Mrs. Wainwright had come to her death from heart failure precipitated by being frightened by some person or persons unknown. Anyone could have told them that much from the first and saved all the bother.

Later on, at about eleven, the remains of the poor woman were laid to rest in Calvary Cemetery. I have no sympathy whatever with sentimental, sniffly females; but it is useless to deny that, as I stood in the front of the amazingly large throng of people who had gathered to pay their respects to one who had been so strangely hurried into eternity, and saw the stunned expression upon old Mr. Wainwright's face as the casket disappeared, I found it necessary to make discreet use of my own handkerchief lest anyone accuse me of weakness.

After this, though, things quieted down somewhat. At my suggestion, the guests of the Arms met and subscribed five hundred dollars—a hundred of it was mine and a hundred Willoughby's—for the capture of the robber. Then most of us endeavored to resume our customary routine.

There were, however, as I anticipated, a few exceptions. Mrs. Alexia Jane Biggs-Kelsey, a sportive, gad-about widow, with more airs about her than money, announced her intention of leaving within the week.

"I simply can't get into bed any more," I remember her sighing, with a coy glance at Mr. McAllister, "without a horrid feeling that some one is creeping in at my window, or that something queer is going to happen to me. It must be wonderful to have some one big and brave and strong to look after one." . . . As I told Agatha, any woman who can live to bury two husbands is well able to look after herself; and if any man got into her room at night the big and strong part would come when he tried to get out again.

ALSO, old Mr. Keenoy and plump Maggie Meehan were in a fever of anxiety. They were getting themselves into a complicated tangle of alibis (I believe this is Scully's term) trying to explain to everyone who would listen just what they had been doing with themselves about the time of Mrs. Wainwright's death. It is a fact that their movements were never quite cleared up; but, as matters between them had for years been on the point of culminating in an engagement, and everyone knew that they regularly availed themselves of the darkness of a near-by motion-picture theater rather than the well-lighted lounge of the Arms, no one was in the least worried about their movements except themselves.

The reason for this childish nervousness on their part, of course, was that Mrs. Wainwright's strange dying call to her husband had caused Scully to go over the names of all the guests and servants in search of any that sounded even remotely like "key," or "he," or whatever it was she had said. In his blundering but bull-dog way, he had picked out Mr. Keenoy, Maggie, and a chamber-maid known as Eliza McFee for questioning. On discovering, however, that old Mr. Keenoy's rheumatism and Maggie's weight made it inconceivable for either of them to have climbed up the corner of the wall and gotten in through Mrs. Wainwright's window, and that the maid, a silent, harmless little mouse of a woman, had been let go by Papin more than three weeks previous because of some sudden illness, he had turned his attention to the matter of the keys to the Wainwright suite.

WHAT he discovered about this I did not learn until that evening. But about half-past eight he dropped into our sitting-room. Mr. McAllister was already there, relating the theories of some of the guests to Willoughby—and very fatuous ones they were, indeed. Thus we practically formed a note-comparing meeting of those who had been the first on the scene of the tragedy. It needed but one glance at Scully's gloomy face, though, to tell me that he had discovered nothing helpful.

The keys, it seems, had been practically disposed of. There were five of them in all: two for Mrs. Wainwright's door, two for her husband's, and a maid's master-key.

Of these, two were merely duplicate keys, which had been made to replace any that might be later lost or carried away. Armand Papin has never been a man to allow anything which has taken money out of his pocket to lie around carelessly, so these keys were prudently kept with a bunch of other duplicates in his private safe; and there, upon returning to the office after Mr. Wainwright's summons, he had found them. No one had access to this safe but himself, and, if you were to believe him, the keys showed no signs of having been disturbed.

One of the other keys was, of course, Mrs. Wainwright's, who had kept it in her purse, where it was still lying; the fourth, Mr. Wainwright's, always on his key-ring; and the last, as I have said, a master-key which would open any door on the floor. The maid who carried it, however, had been in the employ of Papin for more than seven years—something of a phenomenon in itself, you may be sure—and, in spite of that, had a perfect record for honesty and good conduct. Mr. Wainwright, as well as the maid, was positive his key had never been out of his possession on or before Saturday night for a moment.

In addition, Scully had been investigating Miss Bristol's party, or rather the monthly meeting of her little bridge club which had happened to be at her house. He had somehow gotten the names of various people who had attended, and on some clumsy pretext or another had managed to talk to nearly every one of them. But the deeper he had probed into the matter, the more apparent it had become that he was wasting his time—that Miss Bristol had been present with her guests during the entire evening.

In the end he had had to admit that there was nothing suspicious about the party whatever. I imagine this had caused him genuine regret, as his tone indicated that he had had hopes of putting Mrs. Wainwright's companion behind bars before sunset.

"What did I tell you?" he lamented when he had concluded. "Didn't I say the bottom would fall out of the whole thing? Here I been working my fool head off and what have I got for it? Not a da—blessed thing! Nothing doing on the pin-cushion and name business; all the door-keys in the discard; and not a clue worth shaking a handcuff at. The bird that pulled this job just flew in at the window, I guess, nabbed the swag, and then turned into air."

"In that case, my dear Benjamin, all you have to do," Willoughby replied with his little grin, "is—ah—collect all the thin air, distill it, and—"

"Well," I told Scully, cutting this nonsense short, "if I were in your place, I should be ashamed to confess such a failure, especially after your whole noisy police department has been tramping over the hotel like a herd of cattle for two days. Think of allowing an old woman to be robbed and practically murdered in her bed, and not even arresting a soul! If this keeps up, I suppose I'll have to take a hand in it, myself."

"Who's stopping you?" he asked. His tone was such that it almost bordered on the disrespectful, but as the man was plainly unnerved by his troubles I chose to let it pass without censure.

AFTER that the talk languished. I was now too much annoyed at the detective to consider assisting him by giving him the benefit of my advice; and, having aired his troubles a bit longer, meanwhile chewing one of his black cigars into the usual soggy pulp, he rose and went his way. Mr. McAllister, who had suppressed several yawns while the detective was rumbling along, bade us good night also.

However, we were not yet through with our visitors for the evening. I was just rising to retire into my own room when footsteps could be heard approaching in a rapid, irregular fashion which suggested some one doing the hop, skip ^{or a} jump. This noise ended with a loud bump ^{or a} on our door; and the next moment a person clothed in the blue uniform of a bell-boy burst unceremoniously into the room.

"Hello, Prof!" he broke out. "Thought I'd better drift around and wise you up about—"

Seeing me in the room then, he stopped and looked as nearly embarrassed as it was possible for him to do.

This bell-boy was a flippant, freckled young creature of about sixteen, commonly known as "Carrot" from the flagrant color of his hair. Owing to the fact that he possessed a certain low cunning at extracting money from the guests for services for which the proprietor already paid him sufficiently, and that I have always had the courage of my convictions with regard to the danger of spoiling such youths with foolish gratuities, we had never been on good terms.

"When you enter a lady's sitting-room, young man," I said severely, "be sure that you stop and knock for admittance."

"Knock!" he echoed. "Say, I knocked so loud you coulda heard it from here to next November. Whatta you expect a guy to do—bring along his butler to interduce him?"

"You shall hear of this, sir," I assured him. "I shall report you to the management the first thing in the morning."

That merely elicited an impudent grin from him.

"Let's see," he responded, beginning to count on his fingers. "Will that be fourteen or fifteen this mont'? Yep, fifteen's right. Why dont'cha borra a note-book and write 'em down? Then every coupla weeks you could turn 'em all in at onst—"

"Tut, tut, Carrot!" Willoughby interrupted. "To a lady, this talk will not do. No, I'm afraid this will never do at all, sir. Suppose you exercise your—ah—melifluous vocal organs, instead, in telling me—ahem—how you fared."

I thought I detected a significant look pass between them; whereupon the freckled one said:

"Nothin' doin', Prof. There you got the whole works in a nut-shell."

"Eh, nothing doing?"

"Not a knock-kneed thing."

"Tsit, tsit, that is unfortunate, most unfortunate. What—ah—measures did you take in the matter, if I may ask?"

"Measures! Whatta you mean, measures? We didn't take no measures. We just done what you said. Glue was our middle name—glue with a capital G. Off to the joint and back again. Nowheres else."

"And the question of whether the joint contains a—ahem—that is to say—"

"I gotcha. Nope, it don't. I sent in one o' the other dumb-bells to ask about 'em, but nothin' stirrin'. Don't keep 'em a-tall—there, anyways."

"Hm-m. I take it that you also did not overlook the second matter which—"

"You take it right, Prof. We been on the job there, too. But everything looks K. O.—so far."

"Well, well," Willoughby mused at the conclusion of this impossible dialogue, "that would seem at first blush almost a—ah—a knock-over, eh? However, I cannot bring myself to believe so. There is nothing to do, therefore, but keep on. Just pass the word along, will you?"

"Will I?" replied the other. "Say, me and my gang eats up this kind of stuff!"

"That is all, then, for the present; and thank you. Thank you all very much, indeed, Carrot."

The young rascal looked at my brother queerly for a moment, then slowly started for the door. There he hesitated.

"Gee," he remarked thoughtfully, "that's funny, aint it?"

"What's funny, Carrot?" Willoughby inquired.

"Why, I was just thinkin'," the boy responded. "I was just thinkin' how far them cars has to go to get downtown, and how—slow they go. Say, you know it takes them poky old tin-cans darn near a coupla hours to get down and back—"

"Ah yes, yes, I see!" Willoughby slipped his fingers cautiously into his pocket—no doubt he imagined that I did not notice it—crossed over to the red-headed one's side, and patted him on the hand. "A couple of hours, of course. So it does."

The Carrot creature looked down at his hand, then, cocking his head like a parrot, had the effrontery to speak again.

"Say, I just thought of another funny thing," he went on. "If they was two sets of guys had to wait around like, and—"

"Two!" Willoughby echoed. "Why, two, certainly! Tsit, tsit, tsit! That phase of the matter quite slipped my memory, I assure you. In that case it would use up twice as much time and—er—mileage, wouldn't it? Unquestionably."

Again he patted the shameless boy's hand; and this time that individual allowed his large, disorderly teeth to show in a grin which stretched his flexible mouth almost from ear to ear. He mumbled something

that sounded like "Now you're talkin', old top. You can count on me," and removed his obnoxious presence from the room.

"After all I've said," I rebuked Willoughby then, "you still persist in giving those avaricious creatures money, don't you? Sometimes I do not know what to think of you at all!"

"Now, now Keturah," he attempted to pacify me. "Why look upon the matter in that unpleasant way? Let us say that I was—ahem—merely sending out my bills for services rendered."

CHAPTER VI

WHEN I descended to breakfast the following morning, Willoughby had already finished and gone. With no childishly eccentric activities on his part to mortify me, I was able to enjoy the meal—the first time I had done so since Saturday night.

As a matter of fact the whole hotel seemed in a heavy calm after the hubbub of the past two days. When the morning passed in the same manner, with everyone, even the unmannerly bell-boys, quietly going about his usual affairs, I began to believe that the Wainwright matter was closed as far as we were concerned.

In this I was greatly mistaken. It was not.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, I was knitting before my fire, with Adonis doing some of his charming tricks before me, when once more footsteps came pounding down the hallway. My door was open, as it happened, and the next moment another one of Papin's odious crew of bell-boys was standing within it. He was breathless.

"Where's the Prof?" he burst out, mutilating the language as usual. "Zee here?"

"Are you referring," I inquired rebukingly, "to Professor Witt?"

"Yeh, that's what I said, aint it—the Prof. Where is he?"

"What do you wish with him?"

"Aw fudge!" he replied. "What's the diff? I gotta find him, that's all."

"Very well, go and do so," I suggested. "You may close the door behind you."

"Aw, come on, be a sport!" he urged. "The old boy forgot to give me a line on where to grab him. There aint no use you pullin' the cross-exam stuff, anyways,

'cause I got orders from him to keep my trap shut tighter'n the skin on a frankfurter—an' shut it's gonna stay. Where does he hang out this time o' day, huh?"

"I presume," I informed him, to get rid of him, "that he is conducting one of his classes at the University. That would seem to be the customary place for a college professor to spend his afternoons, wouldn't it? And, by the way, young man, I think this a good occasion to inform you that your language to a lady, as well as that of your associates here, is a most decided disgr—"

At this point, however, without waiting for me to finish, the rude boy darted out into the hall again.

NEVERTHELESS, after that the day was spoiled. I had that same peculiar feeling of tension which I had experienced before the tragedy; and this steadily strengthened its hold on me in spite of the fact that I conscientiously went through all the mental exercises recommended by that excellent work, Philpott's Primary Principles of Psychology, or How to Acquire the High Heart. When Willoughby came in at six o'clock, the disarray of his clothing and the excited glitter in his eyes gave me all the proof I needed that something disagreeable was brewing, indeed.

To my annoyance, he chose to be perverse. He refused to explain the bell-boy's search for him, or even his own disturbing appearance.

"As we say in modern Aesop, my dear Keturah," was all the response I could get out of him, "never—ah—account for your billiards before they're scratched." Having made this incomprehensible remark, he disappeared, and I next caught sight of him in one of the telephone booths.

He remained in this mood—a mood that I might best describe as one of childish excitement—throughout dinner. He was quite absent-minded. He repeatedly twirled his watch-charm, used his fork in his left hand without being aware of it, and actually drank two cups of tea—a most excellent beverage which he has frequently spoken of with unreasonable disapproval. After dinner, he did nothing but pace the floor of our sitting-room from one end to the other, his eyes half-closed and his horrible pipe going full blast.

About seven-thirty Mr. McAllister stopped for a few moments on his way to the laundry with his midweek satchel of soiled linen. He greeted us in his usual

courteous fashion. Willoughby stared at him absently a moment, returned his greeting and began his pacing anew.

Mr. McAllister, smiling at this rude performance, chatted with me a moment and, excusing himself, went on his way.

He had not been gone more than five minutes when Scully bobbed in.

"Well, here I am!" he cried excitedly. "What's on? Sounded like you had the baby with the lavalier roped and hog-tied."

At sight of the detective, Willoughby's face lighted up. He immediately hurried into his hat and overcoat.

"Not exactly that," he replied. "I believe I have merely found—ah—a missing link in the case, let us call it. You are late, Benjamin. We must make haste."

"Late! Holy smoke, I'm lucky to be here at all. Just my luck to get called out on one of them damn'—damn safe-cracking cases at the last minute. Got out of it, though, and busted the speed laws into the fifty-seven varieties gettin' over here in a police flivver. What do I do now?"

Willoughby started for the door.

"You follow me," he answered, with that queer light in his eyes.

They were both about to depart in this discourteous fashion when I checked them.

"One moment!" I said. "Where are you men going?"

"Now, Keturah, please do not delay us," Willoughby responded, with some anxiety.

"This is an affair for—ahem—men only. We're merely going for a short ride, and—"

"In that case," I told him firmly, "I am going for a short ride, also. If the family name is to be dragged in the dust again—and I am convinced it is from the suspicious manner of the two of you—I am determined to be present and see that the dragging is as brief as possible. I shall be ready in a moment."

Both Willoughby and the detective protested vigorously. From protest they descended to argument, and finally to persuasion. But their very eagerness to go off alone convinced me that this should not be permitted for a moment. I was adamant and drove off in the "police car" with them.

CHAPTER VII

WHETHER the detective's peevishness was responsible for it, or he was merely so lacking in training as to be another

driver of the caliber of Willoughby, it is a fact that the ride that followed was feverish. I have a suspicion, too, that there were a number of bumps in the roadway that might have been avoided. Fortunately, however, we did not have far to go.

At Willoughby's direction, we turned north from the brightly lighted boulevard. We had not proceeded more than twelve or fifteen blocks at the most, and that in a roundabout way, when Willoughby requested Scully to pull up to the curb of a side street. Here we found ourselves in a neighborhood as different from ours as day is from night. I do not doubt that at one time it may have been the abode of people of some claim to refinement, for the houses were mostly large, old-fashioned ones of good architecture; but at present everything was repellently shabby. There were signs everywhere offering "Neatly Furnished Rooms," and scarcely a window-sill was without its pair of milk bottles.

I had actually taken it for granted, in spite of what I had said to the men, that the worst we could do would be to walk up to one of the front doors, ring the bell, and demand to see somebody about something. What was my chagrin, therefore, when Willoughby, after peering up and down the street, hurried us out of the car and then led us rapidly around the block into an alley. Keturah Witt in an *alley!*

"Willoughby," I protested at once, "I wish you would explain to me why you men cannot do a little detecting without dragging me into such—"

"Sh-h-h, Keturah!" he replied. "We must go quietly. It is essential that we do not attract attention. Sh-h now, if you please."

"I do not please," I replied. "I decline to be sh-h-h-ed by anyone. Will you kindly—"

At this point Scully interrupted me by emitting what I firmly believe was a series of actually profane expressions.

"It's either a case of you being sh-h-h-ed or the job being hashed!" he snorted. "You would come in spite of the—in spite of everything, so now you just got to bear it or beat it. For the love of Mike, *sh-h-h!*"

With my manner sufficiently displaying my reproof, I followed close at Willoughby's heels.

It would be paltering with the truth, nevertheless, to deny that I was not without some slight measure of regret that I had come on this ill-tempered expedition

at all. The night was oppressively dark. All I could see was a long double row of vague, shadowy, two-story bulks that had once been stables. Furthermore, the wind, which was quite biting, was rising. Every now and then it whipped up some rag or paper into our faces in a way extremely startling to the nerves.

For the life of me, I cannot comprehend why the investigation of criminal matters is never conducted in a manly, frank fashion in broad daylight. If you have reason to suspect a person, go boldly out to his house and arrest him, say I, and then jail him or hang him as the occasion demands; but under no circumstances go wandering around his back alley like a prowling cat in the night. As we went deeper into the tunnel, the advantages of this method continued to grow upon me with unusual vividness. In fact, by the time we had traversed about half a block in a very secretive manner, I had it on the tip of my tongue to speak of it. Then Willoughby stopped.

WE were now in the shadow of one of the largest of the stables. I chanced to be standing at the side of what appeared to be an ash-pit, and I had no sooner taken my position there when what was my astonishment to see a head suddenly pop up over the edge of it, almost at my shoulder. I could dimly discern a pair of eyes goggling into mine.

Scully has since declared in his obstinate way that I "let out a squeal loud enough to wake the dead;" but this is a vulgar perversion of the facts. A lady of culture may, at a moment of extreme pressure, reveal some slight perturbation; but squeal!—the idea is impossible.

I am not above admitting, however, that when a whisper emerged from this form and I somehow recognized the voice, I was conscious of considerable relief; this in spite of the fact that the voice proved to be that of the Carrot-creature, himself.

"Ps-st!" he said. "How's your liver, Prof?"

"Ah, my dear Carrot, you are on the alert, I see," hastily whispered back Willoughby. "Is there anything new to report?"

"Nope. There aint a dad-gummed thing happened worth chewin' the rag about, Prof, since you darn near fell into the ash-pit here."

"No one appeared at all, eh?"

"Nobody but a bum or two and a coupla

rags-and-old-iron Izzies. I been here all the time where I could give everything that comes up from this end the onct-over, and Spuds is doin' his stuff at a shed window at the other. And say, he's got the best of it, too, take it from me! Holy Catfish, it's gettin' cold!—and I ain't had a bite of grub since noon. When I get thinkin' about that there hot corned beef up at Mike's, and them steamin' apple dumplin's of his, and them—"

"Yes, yes, my boy; an intriguing thought beyond a doubt. Before the evening is over, win or lose, your vigil shall be rewarded. I promise that you shall renew acquaintance with the gentleman's corned beef, and even partake of as much of his celebrated dumpling as you are able to—ah—encompass. But now, if all is well, we must get ourselves out of sight."

"Didja borry them keys from the janitor like I told you, or are you gonna take another chanst on the rain-pipe, or somethin'?"

"Tut! Who am I to take it upon myself to disregard your invaluable advice, Carrot? I 'borried' the keys. Not that I have any quarrel with pipe-climbing, you understand. It is an excellent pastime, I concede, but—ah—unfortunately not conducive to the long life of the exterior garments, as we might phrase it. I think we shall have no trouble now, however. The lock seems to be a very ordinary one."

THEREUPON he proceeded to busy himself with the lock of a small door leading into the stable. After he had tried a number of keys with no success, and Scully was beginning to growl fretfully, the lock suddenly yielded. Bidding the Carrot-creature keep a lookout such as he had never kept before, and also whistle at once if anyone approached from the street, he entered and directed us to follow. When we had done so he closed and locked the door behind us.

At first we were in pitch darkness, with nothing to relieve it but a pair of pale gray blotches high up that later turned out to be windows. But the next moment Scully switched on an electric pocket-lamp and slowly began to move the beam all about us.

By means of this illumination, I was able to perceive that we were, indeed, in a stable, a large and dusty one; evidently in a shameful state of disrepair. There were two battered stalls to the right of us, con-

taining some very ancient, ill-smelling hay, while nailed to the wall at the left and leading up to a square covered opening in the floor above was a sort of crude ladder. Except for a decrepit old bureau near the foot of this ladder, holding a few wretched toilet articles and a large, dirty pin-cushion. I could see nothing unusual about the place; certainly nothing that would excuse dragging a lady into it. I had lifted my skirts a modest distance from the noisome floor and was just preparing to question the propriety of entering here when Scully spoke irritably.

"What the *blank*!" he growled. (*Blank*, you understand, is not the precise expression the detective used; but it shall never be said of Keturah Alexandria Witt that she put down in black and white terms which are calculated to give scandal to the young.) "Thought you had something here worth seeing, *blank* it!"

"Tut, tut!" whispered Willoughby. "Not so loud, my dear Benjamin. I assure you there is something here worth seeing—or was, at any rate—and, if you will—ah—keep your shirt upon you a moment, I think there may still be time to display it. May I request you first to see that your revolver is handy in the event it may become necessary to use it, and then to assist me with your light? Hurry, please. Ah, that is excellent. Now!"

With that he crossed over to the ladder which I have mentioned. Assisted by the beam from Scully's lamp, and moving with caution, he began to mount. But he had scarcely reached the third or fourth rung when two surprising things happened.

The first was that a sudden noise came from the loft above us. I cannot, I fear, adequately describe this. It was a sort of cracked voice speaking briefly, followed by the sound of some person walking hastily—I am minded to say stealthily—across the boards over our heads. It ceased almost at once, but it had the effect of causing Willoughby to hesitate where he was, and of so disturbing my composure that I allowed my skirt to fall all the way to the floor again.

"Who's that?" muttered Scully hoarsely. "Gad, what in *blank's* comin' off here, anyhow?"

The second was that, following almost immediately upon this curious incident, a low whistle from outside came to our ears. It was repeated once a trifle more loudly, after which there was a heavy silence.

Willoughby listened a moment, then scrambled down from his perch.

"Quick!" he cried, starting to bundle me and the detective into the nearest stall. "That's Carrot's signal. Some one is approaching. The light, Benjamin, the light! Turn it off. Now—everybody keep down behind the boards!"

I was too much taken aback by the cavalier treatment I received to protest, even against the repulsiveness of the stall, and before I had time to recover I heard a quick, soft footfall in the alley before the little door by which we had gained admission. It was soon followed by the light rasp of a key in the lock. Then a current of cold air across my ankles, and another faint click of the lock told me that some one was in the stable with us.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER that there was a period of absolute silence; absolute, that is, except for two noises: the doleful whir of the wind through leaky places in the walls above, and an incredible pounding which I eventually recognized as coming from my own heart. I have always been a staunch advocate of the truth for truth's sake; wherefore I do not deny that the thought of some sinister, beetle-browed person listening there in the dark—probably bristling with weapons—not only caused my emotions to behave in an altogether abnormal manner, but made our sitting-room at the Arms, with its log fire, seem a great deal more attractive than I had ever allowed Papin to believe.

At any rate, I had reached the point where I felt I might at any moment do something entirely unexpected, when the tension was relieved by the intruder moving. At the same time a dim circle of light began to whisk around the roof above, and I knew that he must be using an electric dark-lantern similar to Scully's. It was comforting to remember that the side of the stall in which we stood was between him and us, and that we were reasonably safe from detection unless he should take it into his head to come around to the open end and peer in, which he did not do.

When I had gained control of myself, I peered through a crack in the boards and saw the shadowy form of a man moving toward the ladder. His coat-collar seemed to be turned up and a soft hat pulled low

over his eyes. Also he was carrying some indistinct, bulky object in his hand. Beyond that, I gained nothing for my pains.

As I watched, he reached the ladder and stopped. He set the object he was carrying down near the wall. Next, guiding himself by his little light, he lifted up an old rake, which I had not noticed before, and began to poke at the cover of the trap-door above him. After a few unsuccessful efforts, he succeeded in dislodging it and shoving it aside. A square of intense black was the only thing revealed.

This accomplished to his satisfaction, he set the rake back in its place again. Then what was my surprise when he looked up and commenced to whistle in a low tone. It was some queer, obscure ballad which I could not seem to place; yet at the moment I had a vague feeling of significance about it, of having heard it before. Nevertheless, I could not remember where or when.

After completing a bar or so, he stopped. He waited a few seconds, as if expecting a response to a signal; then repeated the sound more loudly. This time I heard that queer voice again, and I was sure I caught the glitter of a pair of eyes through the trap. Some one was slyly peering down.

The newcomer made an imperative gesture.

"Come on!" he growled in a voice that had an oddly familiar tone. "Down here, you *blank blank* little fool, and be quick about it! If I have to go up after you again, you'll know what it is to feel your *blank* hide burn!"

The strange voice from above answered in a rapid, gibbering fashion. I could not seem to piece words together, but from the whining tone it was plain that it was a protest. At any rate no one appeared.

The man below thereupon indulged in a burst of language of such a character that I blush at the thought of reproducing it. Leaving all this out, his next words, very low and fierce, were something as follows:

"Come down here, I say, you *blank blank* little *blank*! We've got a *blank* long trip ahead of us, and no time to fool. One second more of this, *blank* it, and I start for you!"

This time, whoever was watching from above did not respond at all; whereupon the other suddenly reached over behind a stout beam and snatched out what appeared to be a long, slender whip. Giving vent to another outburst of shocking ex-

clamations, he placed one hand and one foot on the ladder.

At that there was a sharp, startling cry, almost a wail, from above. Immediately after, something seemed fairly to leap through the black opening to the top of the ladder. From there, it came scrambling down with remarkable rapidity. My astonishment was such at first that I failed to recognize it; but when it had dropped to the floor and stood cringing and mouthing in the circle of light at the intruder's feet, the real meaning of what I had been seeing at last dawned upon me.

IT was a fairly small, extremely hairy creature, and quite the ugliest and most horrible thing I have ever looked upon in the world—a *monkey!*

"Ah, you ugly little imp of *blank!*" he exclaimed, giving the baboon-creature a cut with the whip that elicited another wail. "You finally condescended to come, did you? Well, *blank* you, you've had your last chance to keep me waiting. It's bad enough to be carrying that fat old goose's lavalier around day and night without having you to stew over. Now in with you! This is where you make your exit from the scene for good!"

Saying which, he stooped suddenly, drew out into the light the bulky object which he had set aside a few minutes back, and opened it. My eyes had now become more accustomed to the dim illumination, so I was able to recognize it as a large, empty suit-case. Roughly seizing the baboon-creature by the scruff of the neck, the stranger now attempted to force it inside. The animal resisted, whimpering dismally.

"*Blank* you to everlasting *blank!*" cried the man in a snarling whisper. "Get in there! It's a wonder I was able to beat enough sense into you to do the job at all! What's the matter with you, anyway? Oh-h, afraid, are you? Instinct telling you you're in danger, eh? So that's it! Well, it's telling you right, then, by *blank!* You're going to find out how it feels to spend the night at the bottom of the river, with a rock tied to your neck big enough to keep you out of sight of any of those prying fools for good. After that, I hope to *blank*, I'll be able to rest easy. . . . In there now, you hairy hound of *blank*, before I beat the last drop of blood from your body."

He concluded by making a savage gesture with the whip; at the sight of which

the creature, giving one final wail, ceased his resistance and allowed himself to be literally thrown into the suit-case.

Immediately the stranger slammed it shut, snapped the latches, and proceeded to buckle the straps. This done, he quickly dusted off his trousers and rose to his feet. Breathing somewhat noisily, he lifted the suit-case. He began to move toward the door.

"Now a taxicab to the bridge," I understood him to mutter, "and this business, thank Heaven, is cleaned up."

There was a brief silence, then—

"Cleaned up is *right!*" barked a voice in my ear. "Stand where you're at!"

IHAD quite forgotten the detective and Willoughby in the excitement of watching the other, so that before I realized that this sudden deafening shout in my ear came from Scully, the detective had already darted around the end of the stall. With his torch sending its beam before him, and Willoughby shuffling along behind, he was striding—quite fearlessly, I am bound to say—toward the stranger.

Even then I did not recognize that stranger. Whether it was that my blood pressure had now gotten so completely out of bounds as to prevent my mind functioning in its usual calm, collected way, or that the man's turned-up coat-collar and turned-down hat-brim entirely altered his appearance, I am unable to determine. The fact, nevertheless, must be recorded truthfully: I was deceived. The next moment, however, he had awakened from the momentary trance caused by his being surprised. The suit-case struck the plank with a bump. His hand, incredibly swift of movement, darted to his side, and something glittered in the light from Scully's electric torch. Immediately a violent explosion all but ruined what was left of my ear-drums after Scully's shout. At the same time splinters, bursting from the wood of the stall a couple of inches above my head, fell over me in a little shower.

It is beneath me to pretend that from that moment on my impressions are not, in a manner of speaking, cloudy. That there was some sort of a contest going on is beyond question. I was aware that persons were tumbling about; and curious thudding sounds and grunts came to my ears, to say nothing of extraordinary varieties of that type of language which I maintain should not be repeated amongst Chris-

tians. Later I seem to remember standing at the open end of the stall and observing Willoughby, hopping nimbly around here and there, while he poured light from an electric torch, as well as excited comments and advice, upon a writhing snarl of straw-covered arms and legs upon the floor.

Beyond these details, it is difficult for me to go. I need not insist, I trust, that I did not faint, but there was an interval when I was sitting upon the floor with my eyes closed.

Be that as it may, I suddenly heard Willoughby's voice speaking to me as from some distance off.

"Now, my dear Keturah, if you are sure you have returned to the land of the living," he was saying in a tone divided between exultation and regret, "permit me to prove to you that—ah—all is not gold that glitters, and fine manners do not necessarily make fine gentlemen. Keturah, Keturah! Will you look here, please? Here, take my hand if you're dizzy!"

"Dizzy!" I said. "I am *not* dizzy. I am never dizzy!"

I turned my gaze upward then and I saw, standing at the side of the detective, a battered, disheveled, scowling individual with straw all over him and handcuffs on his wrists. And, in spite of the deplorable condition he was in, I somehow recognized him at last. It was Mr. McAllister!

CHAPTER IX

OF the events immediately following, I feel that I cannot speak in detail. It will suffice, I trust, if I touch lightly upon the short, silent ride to Scully's police station; the dispatching of other officers in the car to arrest Miss Bristol, and their return with that weeping and repentant person; and the distressing interview in which Mr. McAllister, now transformed into a bitter sardonic person who I could scarcely bring myself to believe was the affable bachelor of the Lafayette Arms, scornfully admitted his theft of the De Marquis lavalier and, in the presence of us all, exposed the almost incredible methods by which he had averted suspicion.

Also, I will but mention his admission that he was at one time a trainer of animals for the stage; the locating of the marvelous jewel skillfully sewed into the lining of his coat; and, at the conclusion, the eccentric conduct of my brother Wil-

loughby in loudly congratulating the somewhat confused Scully upon his handling of the case and the magnificent deductive powers by which he had succeeded in unraveling the mystery.

From these painful incidents, I pass to a time an hour or so later, when Scully and Willoughby and I were once more before the freshly kindled log fire in our sitting-room.

Willoughby was placidly smoking his disreputable scorched pipe, and Scully puffing voluminous clouds of sickly-looking smoke into the air from one of his pudgy, black cigars. Yet somehow I did not at the moment feel disposed to put a stop to it.

"That was darned white of you, Prof," Scully was saying, "to pull that stunt for me down at the station like you did. As long as you're set on having it that way, and I got the wife to think of and that mortgage, and the—the new kid and everything, I'm going to let the bunk you handed them stand—and thank my lucky stars. Course, I know money ain't any object to you, but just the same I got a long memory, and I—I—well, I aint forgettin' nothin', that's all. At the same time, if I'm the boy that's goin' to grab off the credit and the sheckels for solvin' this case, I wish you'd tell me how in thunder I done it."

"Ah!" Willoughby came out of his abstraction and indulged in his little smile. "How you did it? Yes, that might be advisable, very advisable, indeed. Why, my dear Benjamin, you really found the affair quite simple. Of course, you were a bit confused at first, but after you had solved the meaning of Mrs. Wainwright's dying remark about 'key'—"

"Oh sure! After I had seen through that, it was pie, wasn't it? Only—how did I see through that?"

"Rather accidentally, honesty compels me to admit. As it happens, you have—ah—always been deeply interested in dumb animals in general, and the excellent collection of them at the zoo out in the park in particular. Thus you chanced to be there last Sunday afternoon, and in the course of your wanderings you arrived at a cage where dwell those—ahem—hairy little creatures, the monkeys.

"It was not until you had been pondering for some time over their intelligence and their adaptability to training, however, that an astonishing question flashed across your mind: Was it possible that old Mr.

Wainwright, when he understood his wife to call out 'key,' could have heard merely the terminal syllable of a word, and not a word itself? The more you considered this, the more you were fascinated by the idea. With the thought in your mind that trained monkeys had been taught to do things a thousand times more difficult than the purloining of a pin-cushion, you hurried back to the Arms.

"There you satisfied yourself that, if a monkey had been used, it most probably gained access to Mrs. Wainwright's apartment that fatal night through the small window in her own bathroom. Like everyone else, you had been thrown off the track, at first, because it had been apparent that this window could never accommodate a man. You now saw, however, that it might accommodate a not too large monkey."

"You don't say! Sharp old fox, aint I? Wonder how I picked on that bathroom window with so much better dope starin' me in the face?"

"How? By what else, my dear Benjamin, but that keen analytical process of elimination you never fail to disclose in your investigations? The very night of the robbery, you had assured yourself that all the windows, doors, and transoms of the suite were locked, except the little window I have mentioned and the large one in Mr. Wainwright's bedroom. Also, as you had informed Professor Witt over the telephone early Sunday afternoon, you had practically discarded the doors as a means of entry by locating and accounting for every key and its possessor. Which, then, of the two windows had been used?"

"By the simple if not altogether—ah—dignified method of climbing up those protruding rows of bricks at the corner of the building nearest that larger window, you satisfied yourself that no one could have entered Mr. Wainwright's room, or from it Mrs. Wainwright's, in that manner unless he were a giant or an acrobat of almost super-human abilities.

"WITH the theory of a trained monkey growing in favor in your thoughts, nevertheless, you decided that, while it would have been extremely difficult to raise one up to the level of either of those windows from a lower floor, it would not have been very difficult to lower one from a higher floor. You finally repaired to the suite above the Wainwrights'; but when you found that all the windows there were

securely fastened, and that the plaster-dust, which had arisen from workmen tearing down the old plaster on Saturday, had settled over everything in a thick, white layer and was smooth and unmarked on all the sashes and locks, you decided to go one floor higher.

"That brought you to this, the fourth and last floor. Here, Benjamin, you had to consider old Mr. Keenoy, whose room is above Mr. Wainwright's, and Mr. McAllister, whose room is above Mrs. Wainwright's. But when it came to a choice between a mild-mannered old man who has lived here for seven years, and—ahem"—here Willoughby threw a quizzical glance my way—"a perfect model of a gentleman who has been amongst us only four months and who, besides, might reasonably be supposed to know something about the training of animals from the fact that he deals in choice specimens of them, such as—as our dear little Adonis here, you quite naturally selected the latter for first consideration. *Quod erat demonstrandum*, Benjamin. From there on the logical steps you took to arrive at the correct solution of the problem are quite clear to me."

"They are, are they?" Scully retorted, whisking his now frazzled cigar from one corner of his ample mouth to the other. "Well, they're clear as mud to me! Oh, of course—now that Beau Brummel's spilled the beans about the whole thing—I'm wise to a lot of stuff you probably been keeping under your hat for the last couple of days. I mean about the laundry stunt being a gag to bring the monkey here and haul it away again, and about that throat-lozenge business while we tried out that Mah Junk stunt offering him a swell chance to first lower the critter to that window ledge by the rope he kept in the valise and then go back and whistle and haul him up again—at the same time working up a nice, tight alibi for himself. But what I want to know is how you connected him up with that Bristol woman, and how in Hades you located the blasted monk at all?"

"You mean," Willoughby smiled, "how you solved that part of it, Benjamin?"

"All right, then—how I done it?"

"That you found rather elementary. Knowing old Mr. Wainwright as well as you did, you could not help leaning strongly to a belief in his honesty. Therefore, when you recalled his telling you that he and his wife and her companion were the only

persons in the world who knew the secret of that pin-cushion, you thought it advisable to keep an eye on that companion. It occurred to you that, although she was unquestionably nowhere near the Arms at the time of the crime, it was quite within the bounds of possibility that she may have been an accomplice—may have been induced to reveal the unique hiding-place to the prospective thief on the promise of—

"Getting a rake-off on the proceeds," Scully finished. "Yeh, she admits that's just the game he hooked her with. But the question is: How did you—er—I get the dope on them?"

"Patience, Benjamin, patience. I am coming to that. You are now anxious to keep both Mr. McAllister and Miss Bristol under observation, and to determine if there really was a monkey or some such animal, as well as to locate its whereabouts. But as you were—ah—fairly occupied with your duties on another case, you enlisted the services of the entire staff of the Arms' bell-boys. They in turn enlisted the services of an even larger staff of their young associates. Between the bell-boys not on duty and these associates, you were able to keep in touch with every movement of your two principals from then on. You were considerably disconcerted at first by ascertaining that the McAllister pet shop did not have a monkey in the place, but you did not relax your efforts, and your diligence was rewarded this afternoon.

"You received a telephone message that the parties under observation had met in an obscure cafe down on Market Street, and that one of the—ah—associates had not only succeeded in entering without arousing their suspicions but had seated himself at the counter and, by judiciously making use of a hand mirror from behind the coffee urn, had seen banknotes pass from McAllister to Miss Bristol. Later you were informed that McAllister had been trailed from the café to a stable on Enright, where he remained only a few minutes—to feed the animal, or see if everything was still all right, you now presume. Dropping everything, then, you hurried out there.

"You had nothing with which to operate the lock of the door, but with—ah—some slight difficulty you were able to climb up to a window and, after observing all you

could through that, to a higher one on the second floor. Through the first you saw the bureau which he now admits having used for training purposes, and through the latter you were able to make out the monkey itself. A—ahem!—a trifling misadventure occurred when the rainpipe by which you were lowering yourself to the ground afterward proved less substantial than you had been led to believe; but as there was little harm done except to the knees of your trousers you left two of your young assistants to act as guards and returned here. Then, this being the 'laundry-carrying night' of the model gentleman, you arranged—but the rest of your movements, my dear Benjamin, must be clear."

SCULLY sat for several minutes chewing his stump of a cigar into a still more unsightly object. Suddenly he rose and flung it into the fire.

"Yes," he declared grimly, "it's clear, all right. But I'll tell you one thing that aint clear at all. Not by a *blank* sight! And that's why the *blank* a guy like you is wasting his time out at that overgrown kindyarden trying to pump a lot of dope about the dead ones into the heads of a flock of dumb ones. You come on down to the central office and lemme give you a knock-down to the Chief. He could use you! . . . And another thing—about them kids: every mother's son of 'em is going to close his fist on a brand-new iron man if it knocks the old bankroll into a row of goose-eggs! Tell 'em so for me."

"That," I assured him, feeling moved to speak for the first time, "will scarcely be necessary, Mr. Scully, if you are referring to spoiling those selfish boys with money. My brother is very foolish in many respects—"

"Foolish!" Scully interrupted. "Foolish like a fox!"

"—And I do not doubt," I continued, ignoring the silly remark, "that every one of those boys is stuffing himself—if not already stuffed—with peanuts, pop-corn, ice cream, and other indigestible matter at this very moment. . . . Willoughby, is not that the case?"

"Now, my dear Keturah," he protested, "if I may be permitted to say so, that is scarcely a question—"

"There!" I said to Scully. "I told you so!"

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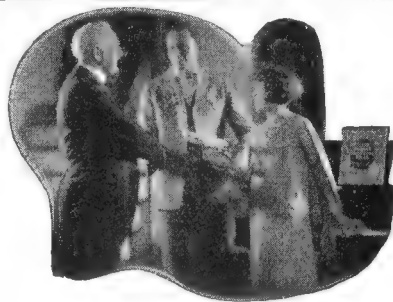


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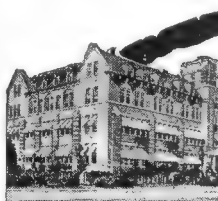
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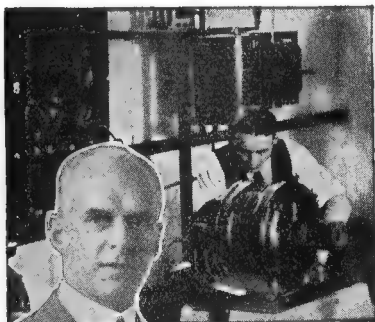
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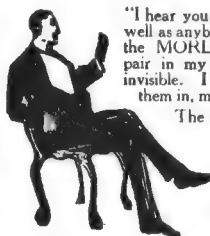
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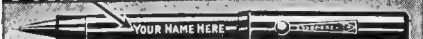
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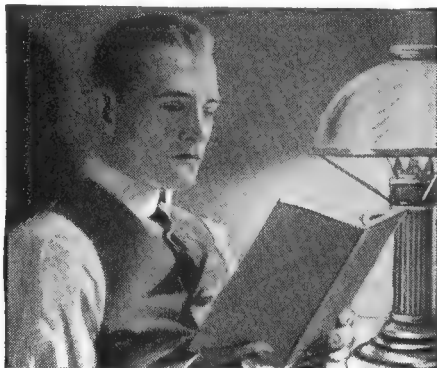


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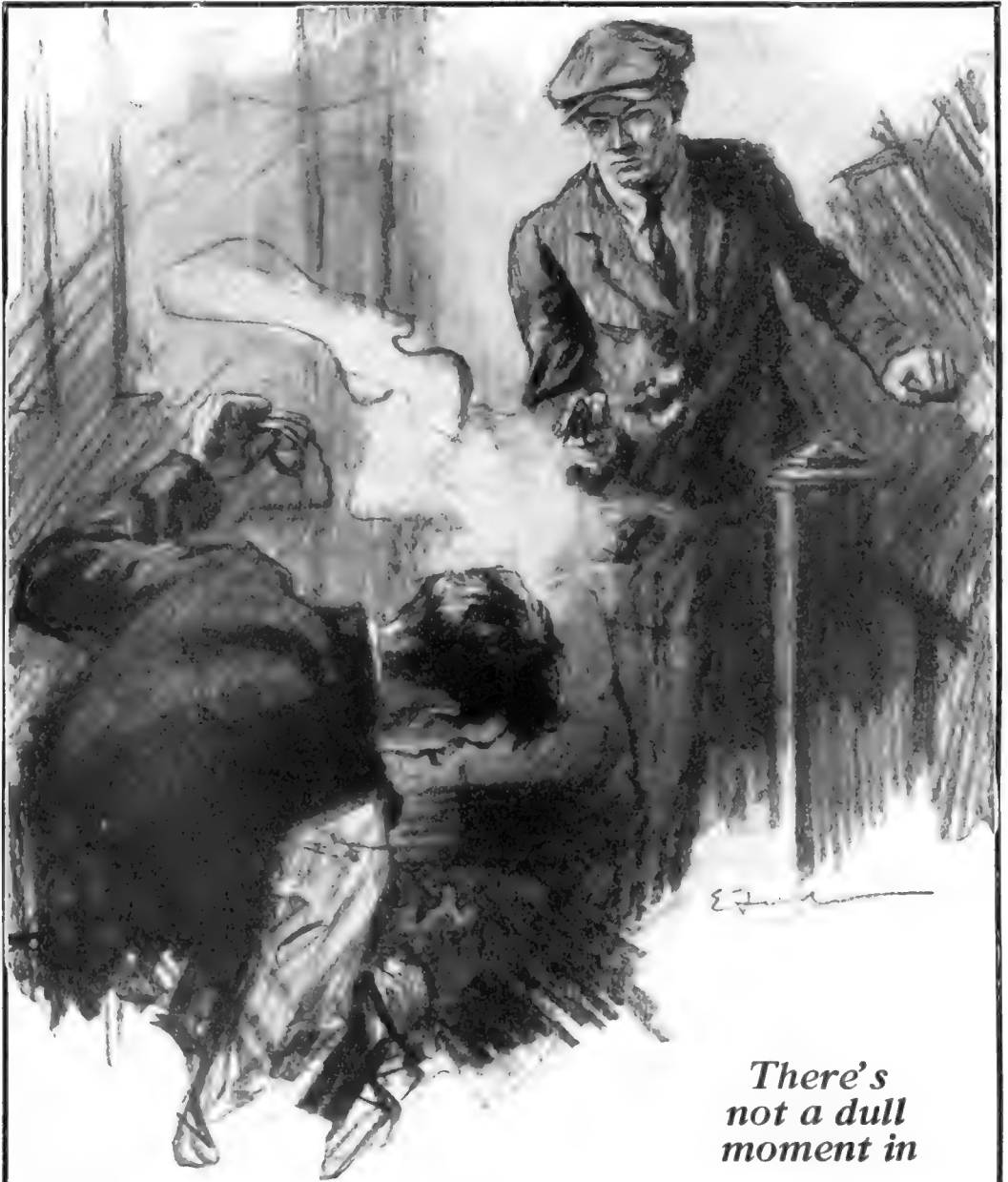
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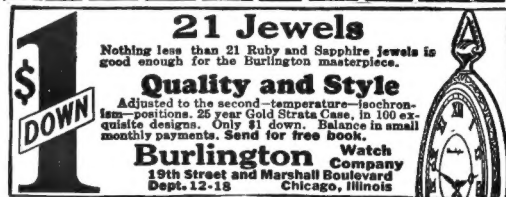
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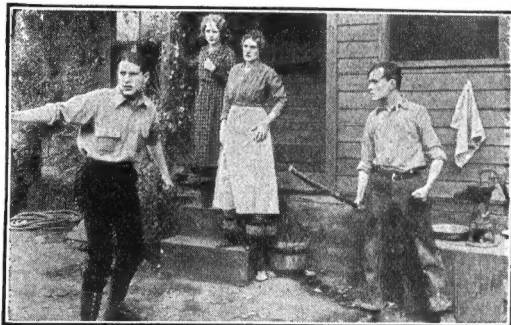
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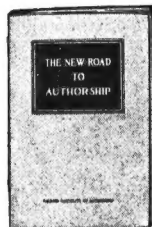
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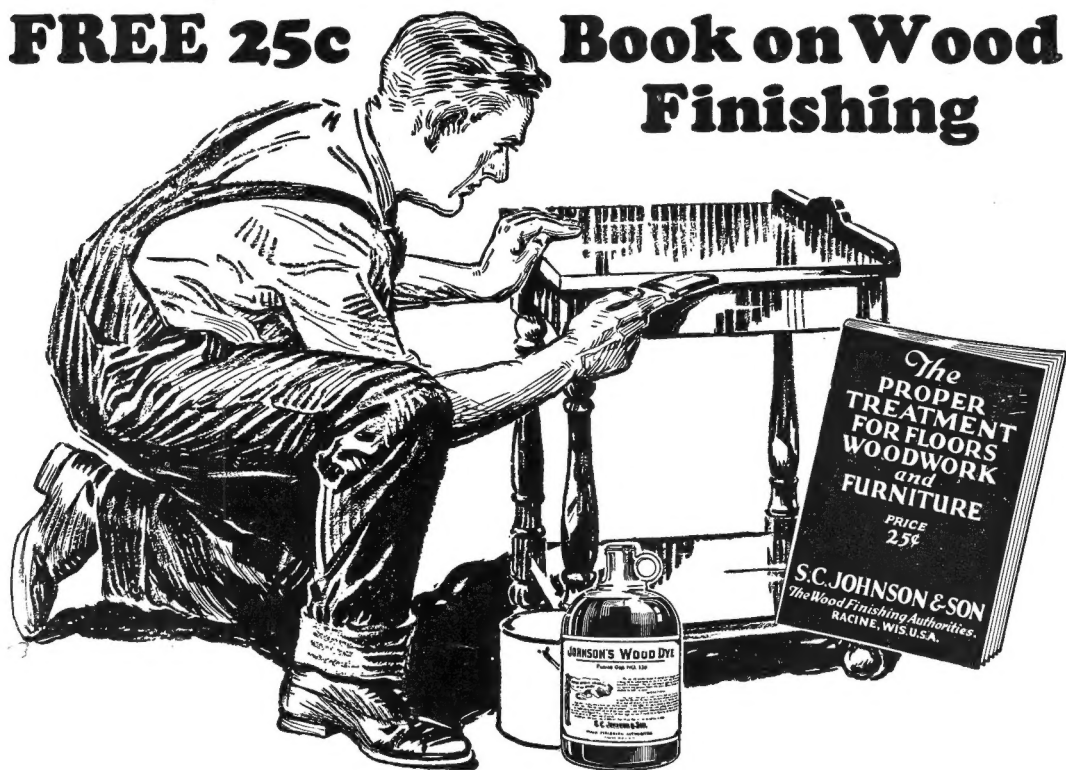
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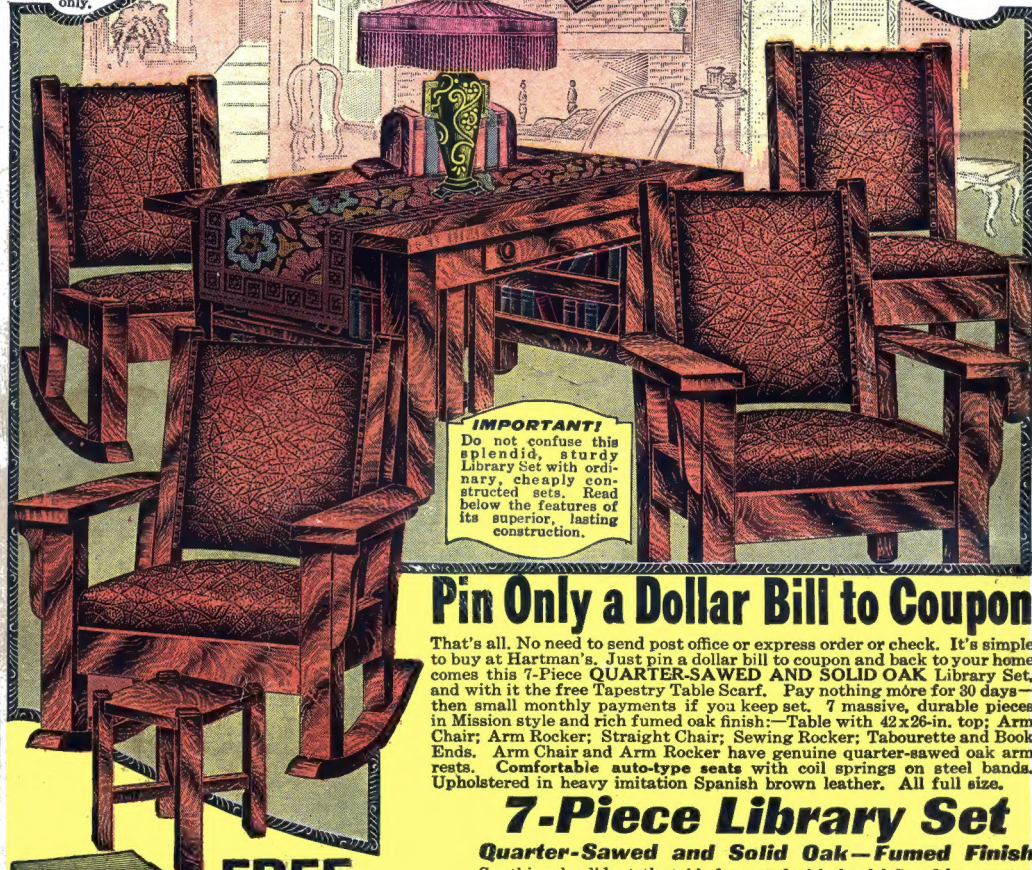
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